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BATMAN
TIME CRISIS 3
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N-GAGE

GET MORE FROM YOUR GAMES//
ISSUE #10// THE FROSTED ISSUE//
NOVEMBER 2003//

PAGE 71: //NOW //SSX3 //REVIEW

SO COOL! SO FRESH!

SSX3

SNOWBOARDING REACHES ITS PEAK
A GMR EXCLUSIVE REVIEW

PAGE 42: //FEATURE //COLDPLAY //BRRR!

GIANT WINTER GAMES PREVIEW

30 AWESOME TITLES THAT WILL KEEP YOU WARM THIS WINTER, EVEN IF YOU'RE OLD!

PAGE 21: //NEWS //NEW SCREENS!

DOOM 3: "GWURRRGH... HARRRRRGHHHHH!"

PLUS:

BEHOLD...THE LIST!

BILLIONS OF GAMES RATED FOR (ALMOST) EVERY SYSTEM IN THE KNOWN UNIVERSE!

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WE RATE NOKIA'S PRICEY NEW HANDHELD...AND IT AIN'T PRETTY// PAGE 100

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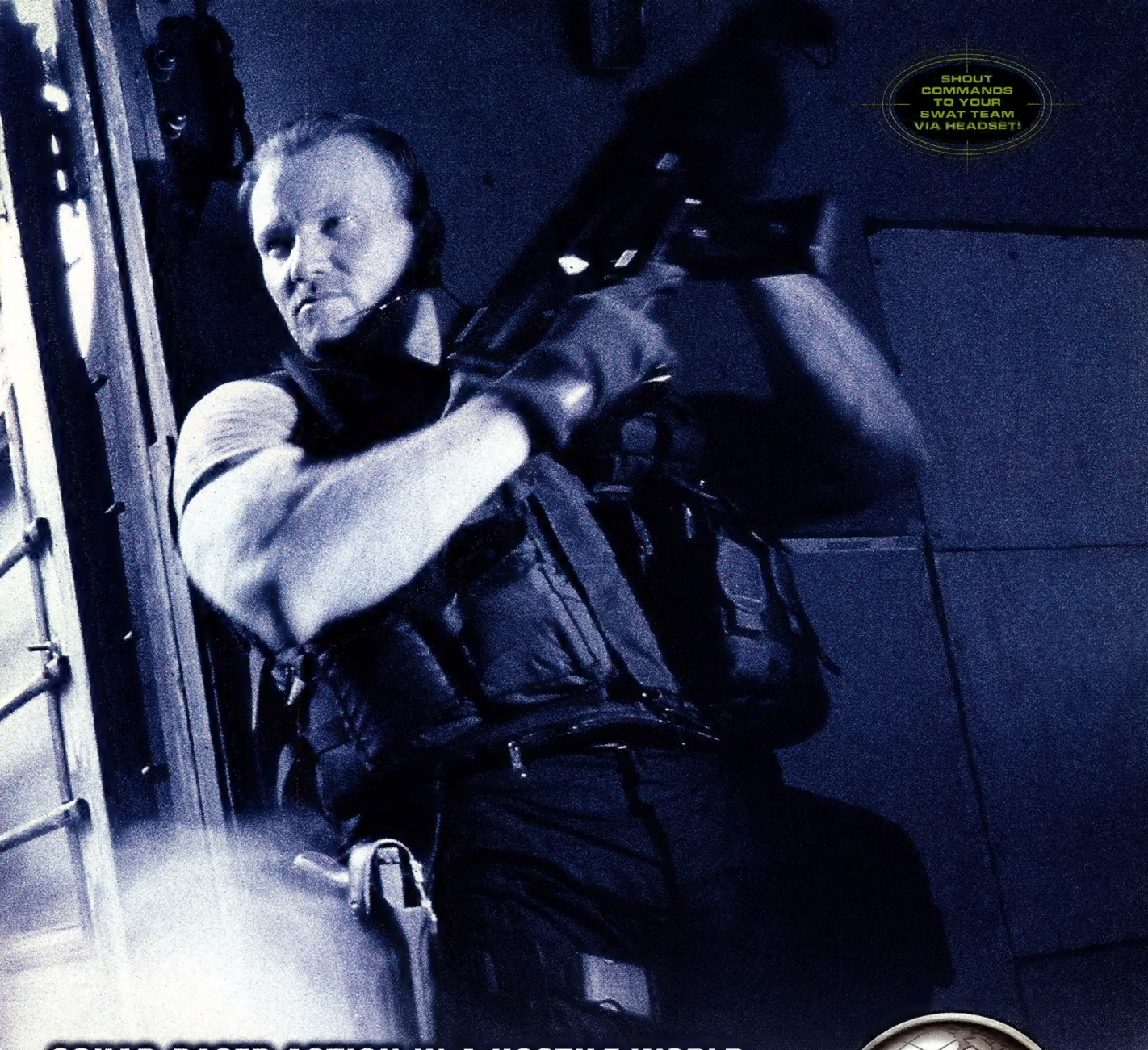


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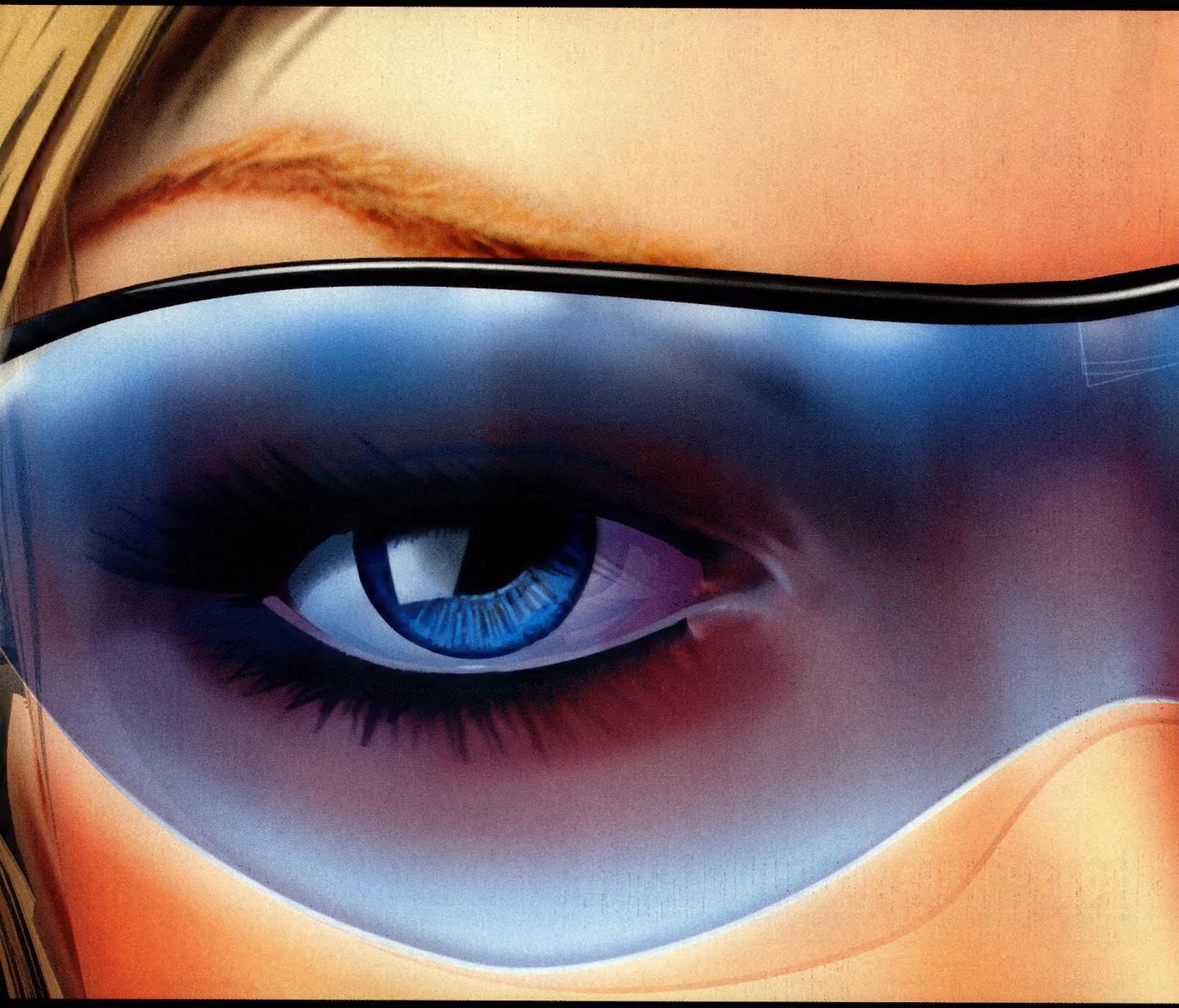
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XBOX

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MATURE
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Blood
Mild Language
Violence

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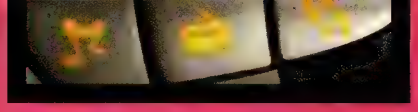
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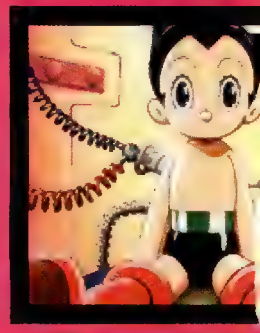




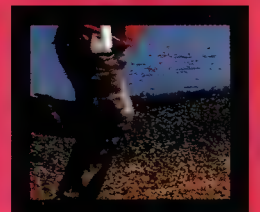




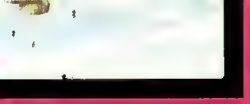






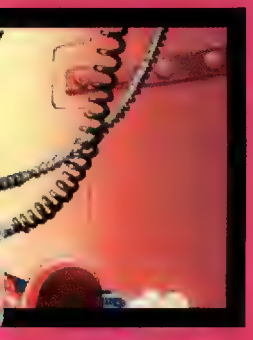




















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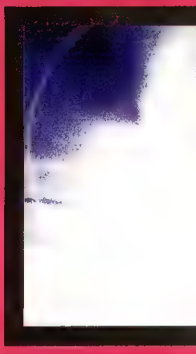
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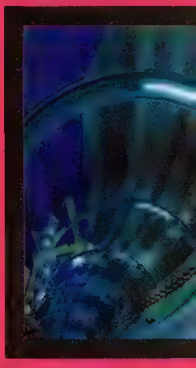
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GET MORE FROM YOUR GAMES

GMR



IT'S GETTING COLD IN HERRE

The sky is blue. The sun is shining. The birds may be singing (it's hard to tell when you're sat behind reinforced glass eight stories up). Look, there's a little fluffy cloud shaped like a bunny rabbit. Or a scary clown, depending on how you feel. While it's still clearly summer here in San Francisco, elsewhere, winter is on its way, and bringing a host of cool-as-cucumbers-that-are-being-eaten-by-eskimos-while-riding-the-luge games for us to play. Wouldn't it be even cooler if you knew what those might be? Yes, it would, which is why our Coldplay feature starts on page 42 and continues, seemingly without end, past some of the most exciting games expected this winter. Be not daunted, though—it may seem as though there are hundreds of games here, but in fact, there are only 30.

In other news, I've been as sick as a dog/parrot/corpse for the past week and would advise all of you to avoid anything chicken related that hasn't been killed several times, deep fried twice, and mini-nuked. That's just a personal view, of course, and in no way reflects the views or opinions of Ziff Davis Media or its affiliates and/or subsidiaries, uh, Mr. Sanders.

Oh, and if you subscribed with issue 1, you'd better re-subscribe now or this issue will be your last. Seriously. We're not kidding

Simon Cox_Editor-in-Chief

NEO DESPOTIC
SIMON COX
EDITOR IN CHIEF

Half-debonair, au contraire, streamlined fuselage. Golden hair, fragrant mucilage.



SANFORD AND SONIC
JAMES MIELKE
EXECUTIVE EDITOR

Tattoos. No booze. All day sucker. New Diesel shoes. Bad motherf****r.



AUTO EROTIC
DAVID CHEN
MANAGING EDITOR

Tasty snack, rightful heir. Flick the black, unkempt hair. Right said Fred. Recently wed.



CURLY BUBONIC
TOM PRICE
NEWS EDITOR

Percolating drip. Coffee cup brown. Double dip tip. Loaded clip whip. Shameless clown.



BURLY NEUROTIC
ANDREW PFISTER
WRITER

Penguin antics. Earthquake panics. Frantic trans-Atlantic traveler. Semantic unraveler.



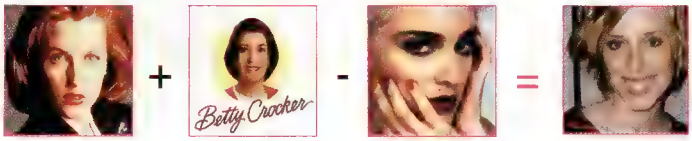
HOOKED ON PHONICS
GERRY SERRANO
ART DIRECTOR

Runty and inclined to scratch, his shirt and shoes never match. He grunts, grunty.



VANILLA ROBOTIC
CAROLINE KING
DESIGNER

Heaven sent, pitch a tent, she's got maximum swerve and a lot of nerve. 50 Cent.



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THEY SHOULD'VE JUST STAYED DEAD!

"The newly announced return of Hunter: The Reckoning, in the form of Hunter: The Reckoning Redeemer, has us pretty damn excited."

Official Xbox Magazine May, 2003

"Hunter: The Reckoning Redeemer is bigger, badder, and far more insane than the previous slaughter-fest."

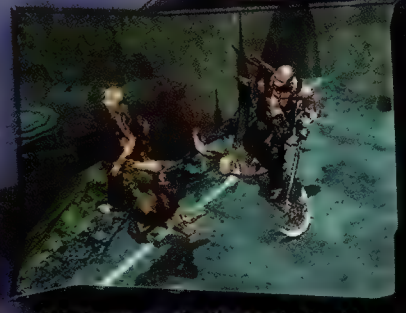
www.IGN.com March, 2003



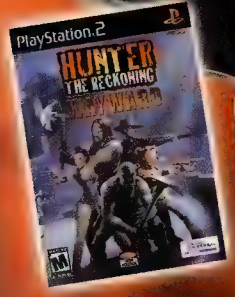
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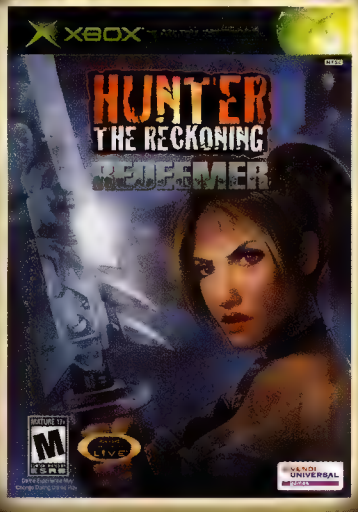
Hunter: The Reckoning Wayward
Now available on
PlayStation 2 computer entertainment system

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POST

JUST LIKE THE PRODIGAL SON, HE'S RETURNED. ANYONE STEPS TO HIM, THEY GET BURNED. WORD!

NERDS VS. JOCKS REPRISE

In your new issue of *GMR* (just got it today!), you pose the question of whether or not the game industry is getting too popular for its own good. I must decline to answer one way or the other, as I see that the influx of gamers into the economy can bring good—and bad—for gamers everywhere. With new interests and new people spending currency on their distractions of choice, the corporations in charge make more money.

Now, theoretically, in a perfect gamer society, the money earned from games would be given to the game creators after the appropriate payments were made to outside sources, and the creators would continue to make new and innovative games. Here, unfortunately, is where the system snags.

Innovation has become scarce since the days of 8- and 16-bit gaming (and beforehand), when simpler games paved the way for more complex innovations. However, in the era of 3D gaming, most notably in the form of the Sony PlayStation, innovation gave way to pretty graphics.

When a larger, slightly less "educated" mass of gamers demand graphics over gameplay (and it does happen), innovation and new ideas slump. Only by breaking away from popular demand and relying on the innovation and charisma that brought the gaming industry to where it is today can game creators continue designing and making games that stretch the boundaries and thresholds of modern gaming. And as such, my complete support goes to Bill Roper and the *Diablo* team in hopes that they, too, can show a new society of gamers (and even the old ones) how a "real" game is made.

_Zyi Drekenloka.

We agree with your general point, but we'd be careful not to sell the PlayStation too short. Despite some of the new demographics it helped to usher in (you know, the people who don't really pay attention to what they're buying), there were plenty of great and innovative titles introduced on PS1, as well as on PS2.

DAED SI REZEEG

What gives? Where is the almighty Game Geezer? I look forward to seeing him every month, with his witty sayings and his foul, onion-smelling breath (well, maybe not that last one). Is he on vacation with Mrs. Geezer? I can picture him in Mexico, GBA in hand, drooling into his piña colada and cursing loudly every chance he gets. Plus, there is no "ATTENTION: You have reached the end of the magazine" saying. Grr....

_Gary Hornbeek



A cursory glance at our inbox reveals that approximately 3,492,108 of you really love the Game Geezer and were saddened to see (or not see) that he was nowhere to be found in last month's issue. Don't worry—the crusty old man is alive and well and back writing his AARP-mandated column.

Geezer thanks those of you who sent in messages of concern, but he was a little disappointed nobody sent him a "get well" strip-o-gram. He's a dirty old man, isn't he?

ONE HAND IN OUR POCKET

I've been enjoying your magazine since the beginning. And, like so many others, I especially enjoy the Retro/Active section. I noticed that EB Games is now carrying the Neo Geo Pocket Color bundles, and I thought it would be neato if you guys did a blurb about it and some of its features. I've had one now for a couple of months and I love it. It's just an idea. I'm not demanding that you guys do it...yet.

_Benjamin Mitchell

Duly noted. As for the rest of you, go buy an NGPC.

WORDS ARE GOOD AND STUFF

Hello. I read your magazine, obviously. But, just in case you're a little slow, I told you that I read your magazine. Now, to

MESSAGE BOARD JUNKIES

Internet message boards are a wonderful thing. They allow instant communication with a large group of people, each with their own opinions and personal preferences. They're also a terrible thing, as stupid people have the same access. Don't be stupid.

Gamers.com. Message board. *GMR* readers. Short reviews. Pfister lazy. Attempting humor. Some success. Some failure.

Mewtiful Joe: "Elegantly fresh." —AutomaticFresh

F-Zero GX: "Broken Wavebird" —LuigiSunshineX

Enter the Matrix: "Don't believe" —master_newb

Otogi: "Beautiful badassness" —aremid23

Star Wars Galaxies: "Masochistic experience." —NowhereMan

VF4: Evolution: "Karate schnitzel" —Corndog_do

Silent Hill 3: "Moisty tendrils" —DarthBoneus

DDR Extreme: "Bleeding Ankle" —XenoBach

Metroid Prime: "Unmitigated Tomfoolery" —kertrats

Disgaea: "Demonic sarcasm" —Sciler

WRITE US: GMR@ZIFFDAVIS.COM

the point: Since I do read your magazine, I realize that all the articles are all very well written. Then again, I'm only a 13-year-old girl, and although my mind is guarded by a force field of adolescent stubbornness, I am still able to learn new things. With every issue of *GMR*, I actually learn a new word. I'll be talking to friends or family, and I'll say a pretty advanced word. My friends don't even know what I'm talking about, and my family thinks I'm some sort of prodigy. Adults will ask where I got that word, and I'll tell them...*GMR*. Of course, I have to explain to them what *GMR* is. Afterward, adults think twice about videogames. So thank you, *GMR*. You have given me an excuse to play videogames.

_Paige

As long as it's not one of Mielke's fantabulous words, keep showing off for the folks. If our school system won't educamacate the youngin's, we'll gladly pick up the slack!

WE AREN'T OTHER MAGAZINES

First, let me say that I enjoy your magazine in general. I enjoy many of your articles, I enjoy your "top-rated on this system" lists in the back of each magazine, and I enjoy your More section. That enjoyment is only enhanced by the fact that the magazine came with a discount card for used games.

That said, I do have a complaint. I strongly feel the scores you give many of your reviews are between "suspect" and "wrong." While it is true that review scores are largely opinion and it is rare that an opinion can be deemed "wrong," I feel that your recent review of *Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic* contains, within the review itself, proof that it's score—10 out of a possible 10, is wrong.

A 10 out of 10 is, by definition and common acceptance, a perfect score. It seems...unfair to the reader to hand out a perfect score to a game that is not perfect. I really think your reviewers should reconsider their approach, especially when it comes to giving any game a "perfect" score.

_Sam B.

We'll say this once and be done with it: In *GMR*, a 10 out of 10 is not a perfect score, it is the best possible score we can give a game. No game is ever truly perfect, just as no movie, no book, no piece of music, or no human being is perfect. Except for maybe Virtua Fighter 4: Evolution. That game is perfect.

YO GMR RAPS



Listen up
Yo i'm reading gmr
while i'm drinking in a bar
All you people will be calling my teacher Mrs. Dar
While i be putting jelly back in a jar
GMR is driving a car
other magazine will be too damn far
GMR has set the pace
while other magazine can't tie their shoelace
xbn is made up of clay
egm is sitting at bay
while opm is stuck in the hay
It's shows GMR always has their way
Ending with a very good day

_D. thomas

Unfortunately, you failed to supply an accompanying beat for us to listen to, so we had to have Gerry recite your dope rhymes over Dolly Parton's original version of "I Will Always Love You." It's not quite as effective, but it did get Tom all weepy.

KOTOR: "20-sided saber" —COCHiN08

Bombastic: "Brain hurt" —neckfurters

Final Fantasy Tactics: "Tiny men" —CaptainWiggles

Futurama: "Charming disarray" —JackOnTheRocks

Animal Crossing: "Sleep deprivation" —ebo4Z

Quote of the Month

"I believe the dingos are in heat this time of year." —lowgroove

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SCARY AS HELL

DOOM 3 SEES THE LIGHT AT THIS YEAR'S QUAKECON

U.S.A.

Through the miasma of a hangover, it sounded as though Todd Hollenshead, Id Software's CEO, had said, "the single-player experience is what we're concentrating on" in *Doom 3*. Hitting rewind on the tape recorder verifies that those were, in fact, his words.

We flew to this year's QuakeCon in Dallas under the guise of "hanging with our fellow gamers," but the real reason we visited the Lone Star State was for a glimpse of one of the most-anticipated PC games coming down the pike: *Doom 3*. While there, we spoke with Hollenshead and Tim Willits, the game's designer, and got some hands-on time with a game that, along with *Half-Life 2* and *Halo*, marks an upswing in the seesaw life of PC gaming. And from what we saw, Id is definitely on track to create an awesome multiplayer game that will also boast a decent story.

Doom 3 is basically a retelling of the original story: The player once again assumes the role of a space marine assigned to a security detail on Mars. As in all Id games, soon after your character arrives, all hell breaks loose and you're forced to battle demons, zombies, and myriad other "forces of hell." The year is 2145 and your objective is to figure out where all these freaks are coming from, and eventually to visit hell itself. The object of the "*Doom 3* experience," according to Hollenshead, "is to be very intense and terrifying." We're here to tell you: It is both of those things. The few single-player missions we saw rekindled the fright we experienced during the original *Doom* games.

Of course, many things made the original *Doom* games frightening, and *Doom 3* will be scary for some of those same reasons, as well as a few new ones. The technology used in *Doom 3* will make this title even more immersive than the earlier games. In addition to a new rendering engine, *Doom 3* boasts real-time dynamic lighting that results in shadows so realistic, you'll find yourself more than once shooting at your own shadow.

Activision and Id have been elusive about the game's release date, opting instead to state simply, "When it's ready," but you can look for it to ship early next year. _William O'Neal

_More info at www.activision.com

XB
PC

ULTIMA X

WITHER THOU, LORD BRITISH! HUZZAH AND WELL MET! ETC.

U.S.A.

Had enough MMORPGs for one lifetime? No? Well, Electronic Arts is about to serve up another heaping helping of Ultima goodness with its upcoming *Ultima X: Odyssey*. Like its predecessor, *Ultima Online*, *Odyssey* will take players into the fantasy world of Britannia, where they assume the roles of warriors, wizards, and other such archetypes as they explore the game's setting.

Make no mistake—this isn't going to be another *UO*. *Odyssey* is a completely new title with an entirely unique feel. The world of Britannia is a lush, colorful landscape full of monsters and other NPCs with whom players interact during group quests. Speaking of groups, adventuring parties will have more options than ever here, as the game will spawn unique private dungeons for players to explore.

Odyssey will utilize the latest *Unreal* engine, which is sure to make for a smooth gameplay experience. The interface seems solid and intuitive even in the game's current alpha state, which is a good sign. We'll have more details soon. *Odyssey* is set for an early 2004 release.

_Ryan Scott

XB
PC
PS2
GBA
GC





_More info at www.origin.ea.com

BUST A MOVE

XIII SOUNDTRACK GETS FUNKY

U.S.A.

Whoever coined the word "bitchin'" surely fashioned it in near-prophetic reference to the *XIII* soundtrack, a collaboration between the San Francisco–based branch of publisher Ubi Soft and music label Future Primitive Sound, also based in S.F. An irresistible nonstop mix of the funkiest drums, the soundtrack features the scratch-tastic talents of Jack Dangers and DJs Faust and Shortee, among others. Available only as a bonus for preordering the game, the disc also serves as a great sampler for all of Future Primitive's highly talented roster. Check it out.





_More info at www.xiii-thegame.com

GAMEPORT VITAL GAME INFO. NOW BOARDING...

Arrivals COMING SOON

SYSTEM	ETA	TITLE	HOW HOT?
GC	OCT	**ROGUE SQUADRON III: REBEL STRIKE** Finally, we're able to re-enact the epic Hoth battle!	🔥🔥🔥🔥
PS2/XBOX/GC/GBA	OCT	**TONY HAWK'S UNDERGROUND** Five games in five years and we still can't get enough.	🔥🔥🔥🔥
PC	OCT	**MAX PAYNE 2** Maximum Payne, maximum pleasure?	🔥🔥🔥🔥
PS2/XBOX/GC/GBA	OCT	**TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES** Easy like Saturday morning.	🔥🔥🔥
XBOX/PC	NOV	**ARMED & DANGEROUS** Ready & waiting.	🔥🔥🔥🔥
PS2	NOV	**CASTLEVANIA: LAMENT OF INNOCENCE** Or: When Tepes Met Belmont.	🔥🔥🔥🔥
PS2	NOV	**RATCHET & CLANK: GOING COMMANDO** So...they're really not wearing underwear?	🔥🔥🔥
GC	NOV	**MARIO KART: DOUBLE DASH!!** You know what NASCAR needs? More banana peels.	🔥🔥🔥🔥🔥
PS2	NOV	**KARAOKE REVOLUTION** Sing your drunken, off-key heart out.	🔥🔥🔥
PS2	NOV	**MANHUNT** We're hoping we don't get *State of Emergency*'d.	🔥🔥🔥
XBOX	NOV	**RAINBOW SIX 3** Tom Clancy smiles a little wider.	🔥🔥🔥🔥🔥
PS2/XBOX/GC/PC	NOV	**JAMES BOND: EVERYTHING OR NOTHING** We'll take everything, thanks.	🔥🔥🔥🔥
XBOX	NOV	**TOP SPIN TENNIS** What do you mean that was out? Are you blind?	🔥🔥🔥
PS2/XBOX/GC	NOV	**MEDAL OF HONOR: RISING SUN** War is sunny and 75 degrees, with light winds from hell.	🔥🔥🔥
PS2	DEC	**FINAL FANTASY X-2** You go, girls.	🔥🔥🔥🔥
PC	DEC	**DEUS EX 2** Ye gods in the machines, we can't wait that long.	🔥🔥🔥🔥🔥

DEPARTURES OUT NOW

SYSTEM	TITLE	GMR SCORE
GC	**F-ZERO GX** First place: Sega. Twenty-seventh place: you.	9/10
PC	**TRON 2.0** WELCOME, SON OF TRON.	8/10
PS2/XBOX	**ALTER ECHO** Alter purchasing plans.	4/10
PS2/XBOX/GC/PC	**NHL 2004** We played a hockey game, and a hockey game broke out!	8/10
PS2/XBOX	**ESPN NHL HOCKEY** Cooler than the ass end of the Zamboni.	8/10
PS2/XBOX/GC	**NFL BLITZ PRO** Once again, there's a reason to buy *NFL Blitz*.	8/10
PS2	**NFL GAMEDAY 2004** If you absolutely must buy five football games this year.	4/10
PS2/XBOX/GC	**SIMPSONS HIT AND RUN** A good *Simpsons* game. Boy, does that sound weird.	8/10
PS2/XBOX/GC	**BUFFY THE VAMPIRE SLAYER: CHAOS BLEEDS** Just a few small cuts and bruises, really.	7/10
GC	**BILLY HATCHER AND THE GIANT EGG** A pretty good game. What, you were expecting, egg wordplay?	8/10
GC	**P.N.03** Could we not get both a good game and some hip-shaking?	4/10
XBOX	**OTOGI: MYTH OF DEMONS** If only all game artists were as talented.	8/10
PS2/XBOX/GC	**FREEDOM FIGHTERS** You can take our capitalist economy, but you'll never take our freedom!	7/10
PS2	**BOMBASTIC** It's been a while since we've seen a good puzzle game.	8/10
GBA	**BOKTAI** Apparently, gaming is now an outdoor sport.	8/10
GBA	**FINAL FANTASY TACTICS ADVANCE** GBA Intelligence +3. Free Time –6.	9/10

Tricky terrain. Treacherous weather. Fine-tune your car to battle obstacles and beat the elements. And with 2-player action, you'll have to watch out for the other guy.



TOPGEAR RALLY

EVERYONE
E
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

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INFOMANIA!
THE LATEST ON...



HALO PC

At E3 in 1999, *Halo* was first shown—on a PC, no less—to an extremely impressed gaming media. At that point, no one had even heard of Xbox. Now, more than four years later, the long-promised, long-ago played and enjoyed *Halo* for PC is finally here. Well, at least a preview version is here in the *GMR* offices. So, what are our first impressions? Mouselook is very nice and makes the multiplayer mode a lot more fun (as do some new weapons, maps, and modes). Not having to play in splitscreen is also good. One rather surprising by-product of the new non-gamepad control scheme: Driving the warthog is a snap, and a lot more fun. You've waited this long—you can wait just a bit longer until *Halo: Combat Evolved* is released for your PC in October.

XB
PC
PS2
GC

CLICKS
GO HERE NOW, PILGRIM



THE CONTEST IS ON. YOUR NINJA GAIDEN HAIKU WINS SIGNED GMR.

Team Ninja's Tomonobu Itagaki recently stopped by the *GMR* offices to show off his new baby, *Ninja Gaiden*. After the slicing and dicing was over, he was nice enough to autograph a few copies of *GMR* #7. Want one? Then wax poetic and write us a *Ninja Gaiden* haiku (gmr@ziffdavis.com, by October 31st). The one we like the best is the winner.

ALL HAIL THE MONOLITH

CAN SOMEONE LOAN US $6,500?

U.S.A.

Just when we're thinking PC innovation is dead, Falcon Northwest drops its 14-pound FragBox on us. "OK," we think, "PCs don't get much cooler than this." But that was, of course, before Tek Panel dropped its 30-inch behemoth on us. Mielke's disturbing tentacle porn never looked so...well...*disturbing*.

The Tek Panel 300 is a top-of-the-line Intel Pentium 4 machine essentially built into a 30-inch LCD. And since really big LCDs cost several thousands of dollars, it surely comes as no shock to you that throwing an awesome PC into the mix means the entire kit and caboodle will set you back a not-so-scant $6,500.

We fired up a ton of games and benchmarks on the Tek Panel, and oh man, does it kick mad booty. Because it's essentially an LCD, many games played well only at 1024x768—but of course, they looked great. The Tek Panel ships with ATI's All-In-Wonder 9800 Pro, a graphics card that not only makes for awesome gaming but also delivers a bevy of multimedia features, such as a TV tuner, PVR (personal video recorder à la TiVo) capabilities, and DVD playback.

But what really excites us about the Tek Panel is what it says about the future of PCs and home entertainment convergence: Eventually, we won't need a ton of different devices to do the things we want to do. One day, one box will do it all.

_William O'Neal

_More info at tekpanel.com



[BLIPS]

ESA Videogame poll

The Entertainment Software Association (ESA) has released a poll that shows some interesting results: Apparently, women over the age of 18 account for 28% of all gamers—but boys ages 6 to 17 account for only 21%. Nuh-uh!

Across the Galaxies

LucasArts has announced that the number of registered users for its massively multiplayer title *Star Wars Galaxies* has topped 275,000. That's a whole lot of Wookiee hairdressers.

PLAYSTATION KNOWLEDGE
THEY KNOW STUFF SO YOU DON'T HAVE TO!



JOHN DAVISON

DON'T TAKE ANY CRAP

In November, roughly 11 new games will be competing for your $50 each week, many of them superb. I know I don't have $549.89 a week to spend on games, and you probably don't, either. This means that some truly excellent games will be lost in the rush, like so many have in previous years. The week *THUG* goes on sale, you'll probably overlook the incredible *Beyond Good and Evil*. Or the week *Return of the King* is released, you'll not bother paying attention to *Prince of Persia*.

This is, quite frankly, ridiculous. In the rush to get games into stores for the peak buying season, what we'll almost certainly see is a few games sell in enormous number, and many excellent games deemed as failures. This will only reinforce the notion that gamers want cookie-cutter franchised games and not works of art. EA's *Return of the King* is great, but it doesn't boast a scrap of innovation compared to *Gladius* or any number of other excellent games that try to expand gameplay boundaries. By buying into the hype, you're only making it worse. This is the downside of gaming's growth: for every *28 Days Later*, there's a *Bad Boys II*. Support the good stuff. The franchises will keep coming whether we buy them or not.

_John Davison is Editor-in-Chief of the *Official U.S. PlayStation Magazine*.

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[TALENT]

NICK BRUTY

THE MAN IN THE MOON



We like to laugh while we're blowing up bad guys. Planet Moon's Nick Bruty knows a thing or two about making us laugh; games like *Giants: Citizen Kabuto, Armed & Dangerous* and *MDK* are a scream. Recently he sat down with us to talk beer, *Star Wars* and Guy Fawkes.

GMR: Most of your titles are really funny. Is because you're British, or are you just weird?

Nick Bruty: Hmm, I think I'll go for the British thing, thanks. See, when you string all those games together it does seem a bit weird, I grant you, but that's not taking into consideration some of my more mainstream efforts: *Cross Country Knitting*, *Farmyard Mysteries*. Nobody wants to talk about those games, do they?

GMR: You've said: "Our past games have focused on two things: being late and over budget." How's that going with *Armed & Dangerous*?

NB: As a small development team, we have to plan carefully. We spent a lot of our initial time focusing on our strategy to close the game late and over budget, but in the course of things it's all gone wrong, all terribly wrong. It looks like we are shipping on time (early December). I haven't checked the budget in a while, but I'm hopeful we've made some progress there what with our new gold toilet and all.

GMR: *A&D* has some cool and unique weapons. Can you reveal one to us?

NB: Absolutely. There's a weapon called the Guy Fawkes Traitor bomb that's sure to please. You throw it into a crowd of your enemies and it hypnotizes them for a while, turning them into traitors against their friends. It's a happy way to bring down a big gang of enemies.

GMR: Any cool LucasArts perks?

NB: Yes! Bob [Stevenson, co-founder of Planet Moon] and I went to see a special screening of *Episode II* two weeks before it came out. It was particularly fun because there was a huge line of people outside the theater who were camping out. As we were walking in, they were begging us not to say anything about the movie when we came out as they had two weeks of camping left. Ten minutes before the movie started, the good people at Lucas let the fans into the theater. We all started cheering as the costumed campers came running down the aisle. I've never seen 50 happier people; it warmed my flinty, coal-like Dickensian heart. And ever since then, I've kept the spirit of Christmas like no other man.

XB
PC
PS2
GBA
GC

LET'S DO LAUNCH

SOUL CALIBUR II AND MADDEN COME OUT SWINGING

U.S.A.

Big debuts are common in the movie and music industries—we often talk about an album debuting at No.1 or a movie having a big opening weekend. Games are no different, and Namco and EB celebrated that fact with a midnight release party for *Soul Calibur II* at New York City's Union Square EB store on August 25. Hundreds of fans lined up to be the first to own the highly anticipated sequel to one of the most popular fighting games ever. One look at our very own charts (see page 28) shows just how well *SC2* is doing—especially the GameCube version, which should surely chalk up its success to a cameo by Link.

A look at the charts also highlights the wild success of this year's installment of the long-running EA Sports football franchise, *Madden NFL 2004*. As of press time—a little over three weeks since it hit store shelves—*Madden NFL 2004* has sold more than 2 million units, making it the fastest-selling game ever at major retailers like EB and Gamestop, according to internal sources. The moral of the story: People love violence.



_More info at www.ebgames.com

[BLIPS]

More Xbox Platinum Hits

Microsoft has announced a new round of budget-priced Xbox Platinum Hits, including such favorites as *DOA3*, *Morrowind*, and *Tony Hawk 4* (sorry, still no *Halo*). Pick one up for $19.99.

GBA Bundle

In an effort to clear out its stock of nonbacklit GBAs, Nintendo is sweetening the deal by offering them with an e-Reader and a *Donkey Kong Jr.* eGame, all for $79.99.

Shootin' Hoops

Toronto Raptor Vince Carter will grace the cover of *NBA Live 2004*, and Denver Nuggets draftee Carmelo Anthony will star for *NCAA March Madness 2004*. What, EA Sports is too small-time for LeBron?

NINTENDO
KNOWLEDGE

THEY KNOW STUFF SO YOU DON'T HAVE TO!



PHIL THEOBALD

CONNECT ME

Back at this year's E3, Nintendo was all keen on hyping its "connectivity" between the GameCube and the Game Boy Advance. Despite the hype, most people left the show disappointed that Nintendo continued to neglect online play in favor of this gimmick.

A few months have passed, and Nintendo's position in the marketplace has become clearer: It won't be able to survive if it's counting on connectivity to save the day. Here's why: Nintendo recently reported that from April to June, it shipped 80,000 GameCubes worldwide. That may sound like a lot, but in the videogame biz, it ain't. Actually, it's a remarkably small amount. And that's just the number of systems that Nintendo shipped, not sold.

During the same period, Nintendo sold (not shipped—sold) 3.24 million GBAs (both SP and the old-school model). Suddenly, that 80,000 seems pretty meager, doesn't it?

If our math is correct, that's 3,160,000 GBA owners who can't take advantage of connectivity. What does all of this mean? It means that connectivity, while neat, is ultimately a waste of time. Nintendo needs to do something quick if it hopes to compete with the next generation of hardware. What it needs to do is quit playing around with gimmicks and start getting serious.

_Phil Theobald is Reviews Editor at *GameNow*.



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GMR CHARTS

IN ASSOCIATION WITH EB GAMES electronics boutique

THE TOP-SELLING GAMES FOR EVERY SYSTEM FOR AUGUST '03

TOP 10 ALL FORMATS

RANK	TITLE	FORMAT	SCORE
01	**MADDEN NFL 2004** Brett and the bro-dar score it a party time!	PS2	9
02	**MADDEN NFL 2004** Madden's getting so big, he takes up two slots on the charts.	XB	9
03	**SOUL CALIBUR II** It looks like everyone bought the same two games this month.	GC	9
04	**SOUL CALIBUR II** I'm sensing a trend here.	XB	9
05	**SOUL CALIBUR II** OK, this is getting ridiculous.	PS2	9
06	**GHOST RECON: ISLAND THUNDER** Can we get back to shooting terrorists now? Thank you!	XB	7
07	**SILENT HILL 3** Maybe it was just a bit too scary for most people.	PS2	8
08	**STAR WARS: KNIGHTS OF THE OLD REPUBLIC** Who needs *Episode III*? Not us.	XB	10
09	**F-ZERO** Pfister broke three controllers playing this game. He doesn't know his own strength.	GC	9
10	**VIRTUA FIGHTER 4: EVOLUTION** Yeah, we liked it better than *Soul Calibur II*. Wanna fight about it?	PS2	10

PS2 TOP 10

		SCORE
01	MADDEN NFL 2004	9
02	SOUL CALIBUR II	9
03	SILENT HILL 3	8
04	VIRTUA FIGHTER 4: EVOLUTION	10
05	NCAA FOOTBALL 2004	9
06	CHAOS LEGION	8
07	GTA: VICE CITY	10
08	DISGAEA: HOUR OF DARKNESS	8
09	SPLASHDOWN: RIDES GONE WILD	7
10	FINAL FANTASY X	9

XBOX TOP 10

		SCORE
01	MADDEN NFL 2004	9
02	SOUL CALIBUR II	9
03	GHOST RECON: ISLAND THUNDER	7
04	STAR WARS: K.O.T.O.R.	10
05	HALO	10
06	NFL FEVER 2004	6
07	DTOGI	8
08	NCAA FOOTBALL 2004	9
09	BUFFY 2: CHAOS BLEEDS	7
10	AVP: EXTINCTION	6

PC TOP 10

		SCORE
01	MADDEN NFL 2004	9
02	WC3: THE FROZEN THRONE	9
03	STAR WARS GALAXIES	7
04	LIONHEART	4
05	TRON 2.0	8
06	FLIGHT SIM 2004	TBD
07	THE SIMS: SUPERSTAR	6
08	NWN: SHADOWS OF UNDRENTIDE	9
09	BATTLEFIELD 1942	8
10	WARCRAFT 3	8

GBA TOP 10

		SCORE
01	DONKEY KONG COUNTRY	6
02	DRAGONBALL Z LEGACY II	7
03	POKÉMON PINBALL	7
04	POKÉMON RUBY	7
05	POKÉMON SAPPHIRE	7
06	ADVANCE WARS 2	9
07	MEGA MAN 3 BLUE	8
08	YU GI OH! WORLD	6
09	KIRBY	7
10	MEGA MAN 3 WHITE	8

GC TOP 10

		SCORE
01	SOUL CALIBUR II	9
02	F-ZERO GX	9
03	MADDEN NFL 2004	9
04	MARIO GOLF	9
05	SUPER SMASH BROS.	9
06	LOZ: THE WIND WAKER	9
07	SONIC ADVANCE DX	7
08	XMEN NEXT DIMENSION	8
09	MARIO PARTY 4	8
10	WARIO WORLD	7

XB
PC
PS2
GBA
GC

PC KNOWLEDGE

THEY KNOW STUFF SO YOU DON'T HAVE TO!



JEDI DORK

What am I doing? I'm playing an Xbox game. Doh! Though there are plenty of A-list PC games coming "soon," right now, we're in a drought. So, I did something I wish I didn't have to do: I took my Xbox out of the closet, where it's been rotting since I finished *Halo*, and began playing *Knights of the Old Republic*—another game originally scheduled to be a PC game first.

We all know that *KOTOR* kicks arse, but unfortunately, I can't really talk about that here because, like *Halo*, it's still not out on PC—and this is a PC gaming column. I can tell you that *KOTOR* did inspire me to finally finish *Baldur's Gate II*. If you love *KOTOR*, I highly recommend you do this, too. This is where BioWare's genius first sprouted, and not one single RPG released since, including BioWare's own *Neverwinter Nights*, has approached *BG2*'s brilliance. Until *KOTOR*

I'm not bitter. I won't turn this into an anti-Xbox or anti-Microsoft rant. I'm glad Xbox owners get to experience the genius of developers like Bungie and BioWare. Sure, I'm frustrated. And impatient. And annoyed. But I'm not bitter at all. AS LONG AS THOSE JACKHOLES AT MICROSOFT FINALLY PUT THESE GAMES ON PC AS PROMISED!

Was that out loud?

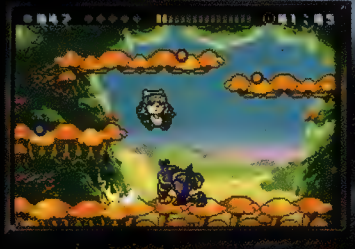
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ATI TO THE X POWER

MS CHOOSES NEW GRAPHICS CHIP FOR XBOX 2

U.S.A.

Back in 2000, Nvidia was flush with cash and on top of the world. It was leading the 3D graphics-card race by a mile, and on top of that, it designed the custom graphics chips for Xbox. Now, things ain't looking quite so green for the other Big N. Longtime upstart ATI has been knocking at the door with its graphics powerhouses, the Radeon cards, and now comes the final insult: Microsoft has signed up ATI to deliver the 3D chip for the next Xbox.

Already, a bunch of rumors about what's in store for the next Microsoft console have been floating around—namely, TiVo-like functionality and a huge hard drive. So, this move makes lots of sense considering ATI's All-in-Wonder TV tuner/graphics cards are becoming a staple of media-ready PCs. As a supplier of PC cards, GameCube's 3D chip, and now the new Xbox's chip, ATI is angling to become the prime player in the graphics industry.

Robbie Bach, senior vice president of the Home and Entertainment Division at Microsoft, has this to say on the matter: "We selected ATI after reviewing the top graphics technologies in development and determining that ATI's technical vision fits perfectly with the future direction of Xbox." Translation: Those crazy Canucks can deliver a buttload of powerful graphics cards for less than Nvidia can. Word, Robbie.

_Darren Gladstone

_More info at www.ati.com

XB
PC
PS2
GC

CALLED UP

CALL OF DUTY ANSWERS THE CALL OF ONLINE GAMERS

U.S.A.

***Call of Duty*, Activision's epic WWII first-person shooter that's set to hit store shelves in November, wants to give gamers the same kind of cinematic experience they've had playing that other almost-definitive WWII shooter, *Medal of Honor*. In addition to the twist of playing as three different lowly soldiers—American, English, and Russian—*Call of Duty* is offering players a bunch of multiplayer modes.**

These new modes (listed below) take place over 12 maps, support up to 32 players, and aim to please fans by going beyond the typical deathmatch and team deathmatch modes:

Retrieval—One team is charged with infiltrating the other team's defenses, stealing a crucial item or object, then returning it to its own base. The defenders must prevent that from happening.

Search & Destroy—As in Retrieval, one team infiltrates another team's area, but this time it's trying to destroy an objective within the opponent's stronghold.

Behind Enemy Lines—One seriously outnumbered squad is plopped down in the middle of enemy territory and must complete an objective against ridiculous odds.



Call of Duty's four team-based multiplayer modes will always feature Axis vs. Allies, with one group (Russian, English, or American) against Germany. In deathmatch mode, however, it can be anyone vs. anyone. Good multiplayer modes can be crucial to a good shooter, and it looks like *Call of Duty* is ready to deliver on that front.

_More info at www.callofduty.com

[BLIPS]

Grand Theft Xbox

Rockstar will release a special double pack that includes both *GTA3* and *GTA: Vice City* for PS2 in late October. Oh yeah—the same pack ships for Xbox early November. So much for Sony exclusivity.

Xbox Live for free

To promote its online gaming component, Microsoft is giving gamers two free months of Xbox Live! if they purchase one of a number of Xbox titles, including the new *NFL Fever 2004*.

Trizzle Crizzle

In keeping with the "street" theme, Activision has enlisted some big-name West Coast gangsta rappers for the soundtrack of *True Crime: Streets of L.A.*, including Ice Cube, E-40, and Ice T.

XBOX KNOWLEDGE

THEY KNOW STUFF SO YOU DON'T HAVE TO!



EVAN SHAMOON

THE YEAR OF THE XBOX

Have faith, fellow Xbox owners. While 2003 has been something of a bumpy ride, it's becoming increasingly clear that 2004 will not only be the year of sending free beer and candy to the writer of this here Knowledge column (it's OK...now you know), it's also going to be the year of the Xbox.

For development reasons unknown, nearly all long-awaited Xbox titles have slipped into next year. While there will certainly be no lack of quality gaming fare this holiday season (see: *Prince of Persia*, *Soul Calibur II*, *Sega GT Online*, etc.), it appears that the heavy hitters will have to wait. And the list is staggering: *Halo*, *B.C.*, *Fable*, *Psychonauts*, *StarCraft: Ghost*, *Half-Life 2*, *Full Spectrum Warrior*, *Doom III*, *Ninja Gaiden*, *The Movies*, and *True Fantasy Live Online* are all slated for release in 2004. Should even half of these titles reach store shelves, it would almost surely signal the most extraordinary year for a single console in recent memory. Should they all hit their target dates...well, suffice it to say, many of us won't be seeing a whole lot of our relatives or the sun for quite some time.

_Evan Shamoon is Editor-in-Chief of *Xbox Nation*.

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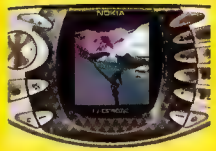
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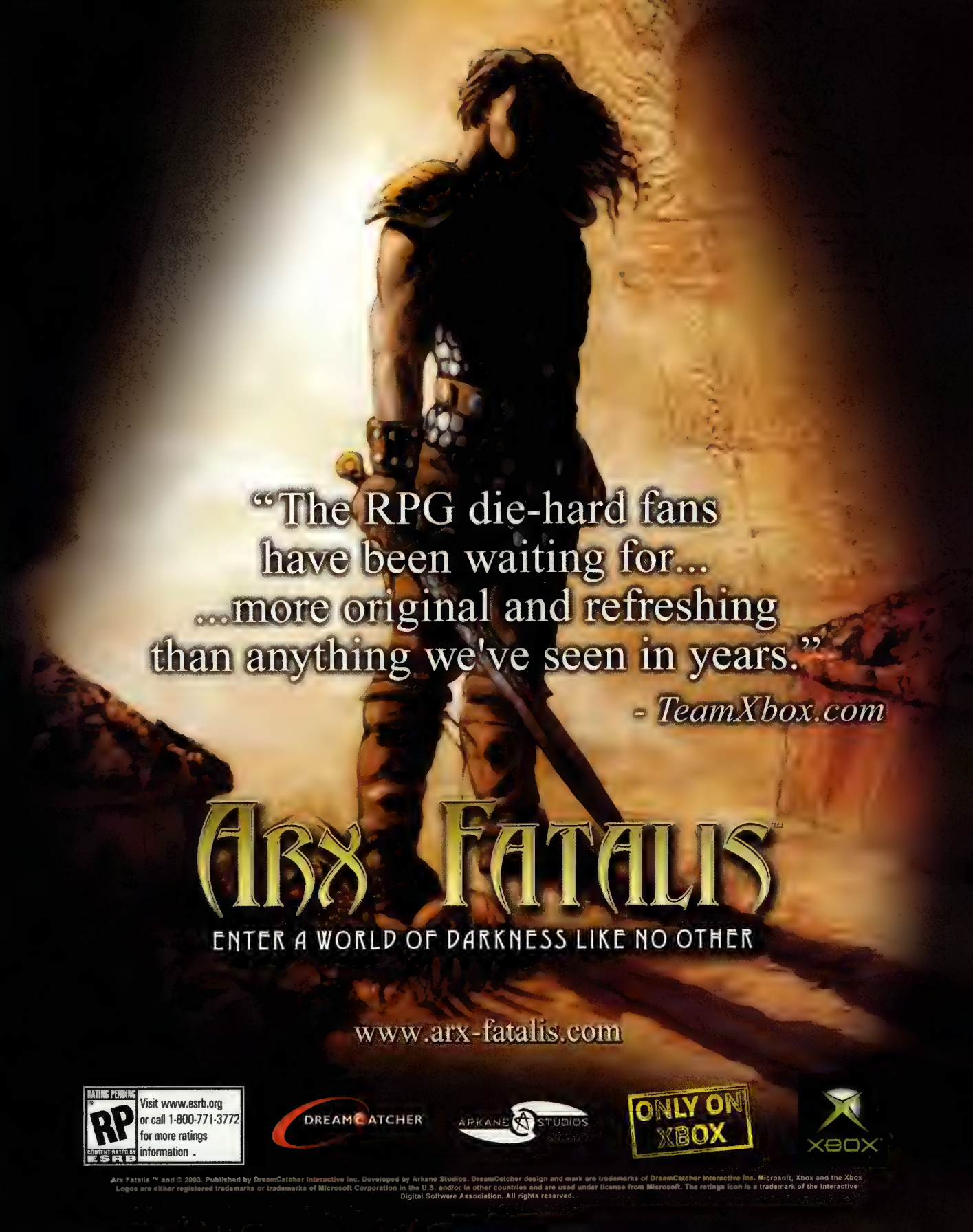
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GAMEPLANNER | OCTOBER 2003

WORSE TREAT: AN APPLE OR AN N-GAGE?

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
	Monday, Monday.		01	02	03 History's greatest actor and musician, Jack Black, stars in *The School of Rock*, which opens nationwide today. You'll find us in the aisles, ready to roll.	04 
05 It's National Sports Day in Lesotho Get your game on, Lesotho!	06 	07 Nokia's overpriced and underqualified N-Gage mobile phone/game system comes out today. We wouldn't worry about launch day shortages.	08 *Viewtiful Joe* for GameCube, *Time Crisis 3* for PS2, *Commandos 3* for PC, and *NBA Live 2004* and *Backyard Wrestling* for the three consoles are out today.	09 	10 Quentin Tarantino's ultraviolent *Kill Bill* hits theaters. They've split the film into two 90-minute parts, the second of which opens in February of next year. Oh, torturous wait!	11 
12	13 Happy Thanksgiving, Canada! We're totally thankful you're our northern neighbor! (There, that ought to get them off our backs.)	14 Midway's *GTA*-esque *Road Kill* is out for all three systems, while the younger set enjoys a little *Kirby Air Ride* on GameCube.	15 In stores: *Mega Man Zero 2* (GBA), *Mega Man X7* (PS2), *Xbox Music Mixer*, *Jak II* (PS2), *Railroad Tycoon 3* (PC), *Gladiator* (PS2, Xbox), *Baldur's Gate: DA2* (PS2, Xbox), *SSX 3* (all).	16 	17 Destroying yet another cherished memory, Hollywood has made a remake of *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*. We'd like to remake Michael Bay into a toll booth operator.	18 
19	20 It's Hurricane Thanksgiving Day in the Virgin Islands. Hurricanes don't seem like things to be thankful for.	21	22	23 It's Chulalongkorn Day in Thailand. Chulalongkorn is fun to say. Go on, say it. Chulalongkorn.	24 *Scary Movie 3* begins today, sans the brothers Wayans. Surely, Leslie Nielsen will make up for their absence.	25 
26	27 *Top Gear Rally* for GBA is out today. Poor *Top Gear Rally*, all alone like that.	28 	29 Out now: *Gladius* (all), *kill.switch* (PS2, Xbox), *Top Spin* (Xbox), *Rogue Ops* (all), *Amped 2* (Xbox), *WWE Smackdown* (PS2), *Monster Rancher 4* (PS2), *NBA Inside Drive* (Xbox).	30 Sorry, 30th, these are the 29th, too: *Tiger Woods 2004*, *FIFA 2004*, *Harvest Moon* (GBA), *THUG* (all), *Quidditch World Cup* (all), *Grabbed by the Ghoulies* (Xbox).	31 Trick or die: The 1979 classic *Alien* gets a theatrical re-release on Halloween. Boo.	

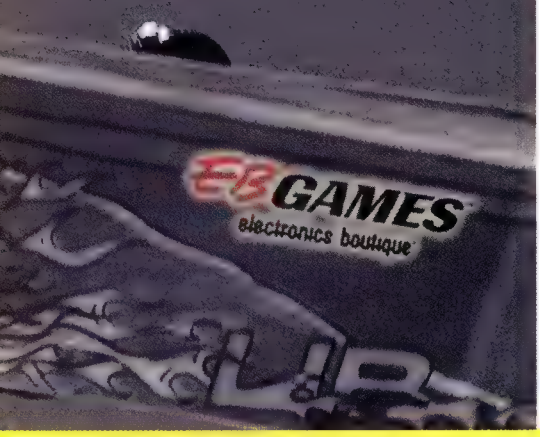


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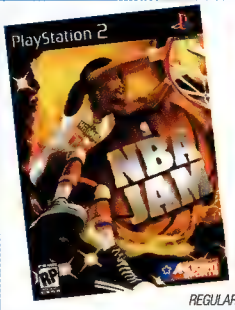
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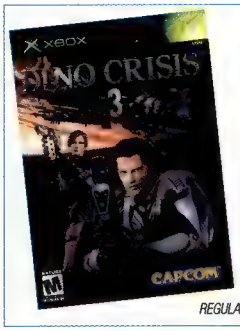
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INTERNATIONAL REPORT

XB
PC
PS2
GBA
GC

BOTTLE ROCKETS

NEWS FROM THE LAND OF THE RISING FUN. HA HA HA!

JAPAN

While U.S. gamers eagerly await the arrival of this year's triple-A holiday titles, things remain busy over in Japan, where development teams never sleep. After all, once you're done playing *Mario Kart* and *Ninja Gaiden*, you need something else to satisfy your videogame cravings—and these will be the games to do it.

First up: Sega's Treasure-style Game Boy Advance action-platformer featuring everyone's favorite boy robot, Astro Boy, in ***Astro Boy: Tetsu Wan Atom***. Word.

Next, renowned production studio Red Entertainment (***Sakura Taisen***, ***Gungrave***) has teamed up with Japanese publisher Taito, J-pop singer Gackt (who claims to be over 400 years old), and ***Cowboy Bebop*** character designer Toshihiro Kawamoto to produce the ***Devil May Cry***–esque action game ***Bujingai***. The main character, Lau Wang Rau, is modeled after Gackt, based on motion-capture sessions with the singer (á la ***Onimusha***).

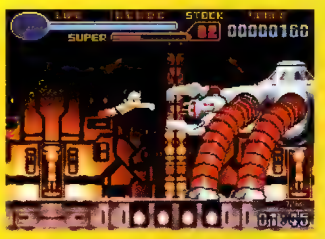
Sega/Overworks' ***Shinobi*** side story, ***Kunoichi***, is well into development and will be out in Japan this winter, and in the hands of U.S. gamers by January.

Coming to America: ***Yuki Kaze***, the Aquasystems-developed flight-combat game for Xbox (based on the popular Japanese novel by Chohei Kanbayashi), which Bandai is publishing.

Old-school 2D swordplay returns to arcades courtesy of SNK's upcoming ***Samurai Shodown Zero***, being tested right now. Yuki Enterprises, a new company comprised of former SNK/***SamSho*** staff, is developing ***Zero***.

In addition to pummeling the ***Guilty Gear*** series into the ground (another update to ***GGXX***, entitled ***New Version***, has been announced in Japan), Sammy, which once planned to merge with Sega, is publishing Genki's drift-racing simulator ***Kaido Battle*** (PS2) for U.S. release in February 2004.

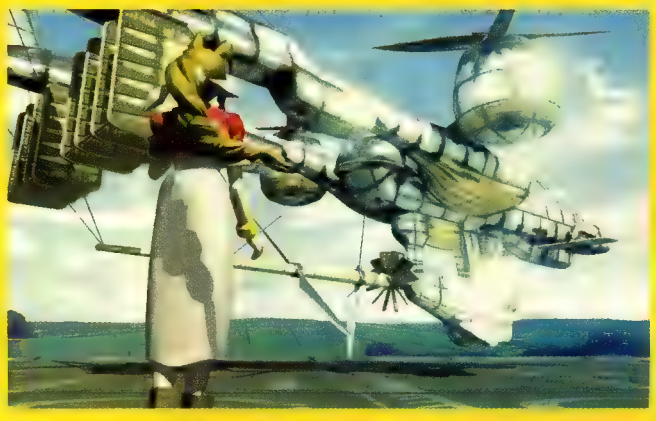
Finally, by the time you read this (the Tokyo Game Show begins September 26), Square Enix will have announced the unexpected sequel to ***Final Fantasy VII—FFVII-2***, featuring the return of Cloud, Sephiroth, and...Aerith. Can a girl get a Phoenix Down up in this? Believe it.



→ *Astro Boy: Tetsu Wan Atom* for GBA will kick it one time when it hits shelves in Japan this December. Let's hope for a Stateside release.



→ Red Entertainment puts some elbow grease into *Bujingai*, a *Devil May Cry*–style action game "starring" J-pop singer Gackt.





↗ Air combat on Xbox is yours with *Yuki Kaze*—based on the anime, which is based on a popular book—heading to the U.S. courtesy of Bandai.



↗ Hardcore 2D-fighting-game fanatics, call your local arcade now to see if it's one of the lucky U.S. test locations for *Samurai Shodown Zero*.



↗ Sammy gets a license to drive by picking up *Kaido Battle* for U.S. release. Go, Sammy, go!



↗ Sega development team Overworks prepares the *Shinobi* side story *Kunoichi*. That's a girl, yo.

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November 6, 2003







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TEEN T CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Violence

PC CD-ROM SOFTWARE

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PC
PS2
GBA
GC

30 NEW GAMES THAT WILL COOL



XB
PC
PS2
GBA
GC

As sad as it may seem, there comes a time each year when you must kick the boys of summer in the two fruits and make way for the games of winter!

These are the games you will play when it's cold (or you can be cold when you play, but we suggest you close the window). These are the top-tier titles you've waited all year to get your hands on. But keeping track of all the things you'll want to play can be daunting, and we here at GMR we understand this. We feel for you. So, we've gathered the 30 games worth curling up with in a log cabin. You'll laugh! You'll cry! This article will become a part of you. Perhaps an ample rump. And by the time you're done reading it, you'll open your eyes, as if for the first time, and say, "Play I must."

WARM YOU THIS WINTER

PLAY

PUB: ACTIVISION//DEV: NEVERSOFT
CAT: SPORTS//SUBCAT: ACTION
NOVEMBER 2003//GBA//GC//PC//PS2//XB

TONY HAWK UNDERGROUND

//LET'S FACE-MAPPING! HAVE A FUN!

In a move consciously designed to diminish focus on the Hawkster and increase it on you, members of the buying public, Neversoft is rejuvenatating this megafranchise with a skateboarding game that could conceivably render all future skateboarding games redundant.

How? Primarily by letting gamers put themselves in the game through an innovative feature that requires little more than a digital camera and an Internet connection. Upload a picture of your face to Neversoft's servers (PS2 only), then receive a code that lets you download a texture you import into Create-a-Skater—effectively making yourself a character you can then outfit with myriad accessories.

Once you've decked yourself out in the illest threads, hit the streets of *T.H.U.G.*'s distinctly urban settings and try to make your way from antiestablishment street rat to up-and-coming skateboarding star.

Adding infinite longevity to *T.H.U.G.* is an astounding set of features that lets junior game designers create and customize everything from moves and skate parks to events and....well, way more than this stupid box lets us describe. You can upload it all—including your custom character—to the Internet for others to download. Simply put: You want this game.











PUB: LUCASARTS//DEV: FACTOR-5
CAT: ACTION//SUBCAT: 3RD PERSON
NOVEMBER 2003//GC

STAR WARS ROGUE SQUADRON III

//THE GREATEST STORY EVER (RE)TOLD

It seems LucasArts is working to erase from our memories the painful mediocrity of the *Star Wars* prequels—or maybe trying to apologize for it. Either way, we're headed back to the past one last (?) time for *Rebel Strike*.

We don't like buying the same game thrice, so what's different this time around? Plenty: new locations and vehicles, such as speeder bikes and AT-STs on Endor; new mission structure that intertwines land-based assaults with standard flight combat; and the tech-savvy team at Factor 5 really pushing GameCube's audio and visual capabilities. Sounds like fun, even if we already know how the story ends.



PUB: SIERRA//DEV: VALVE
CAT: SHOOTER//SUBCAT: 1ST PERSON
JANUARY 2004//PC//XB

HALF-LIFE 2

//FREEMAN, REFINED

It's coming, oh you better believe it's coming. But let's just hope for two things: 1) It doesn't start acquiring release dates like *Duke Nukem* (the proverbial "when it's done" game) and 2) Santa Claus brings each of us a brand-new ATI Radeon 9800 or GeForce FX card (cause they'll both work, right Valve?) for Xmas.

Why? Because we want to enjoy all the gorgeous alien postapocalyptic flavor, including the realistic physics that affect everything and the detailed facial animations, the way it's supposed to be enjoyed. Considering how many years this game has been worked on and the fact that we found about it only a couple of months ago makes us so darn...so darn...well, the word super-pumped comes to mind.





PUB: MICROSOFT GAMES//DEV: BIZARRE CREATIONS
CAT: RACING//SUBCAT: SIMULATION
NOVEMBER 2003//XB

PROJECT GOTHAM RACING 2

//THE WORLD'S GREATEST NEUTRON-BOMB/RACING SIMULATOR RETURNS!

Street racing games have become so real, with photo-realistic re-creations of the way it feels to drive high-performance European sports cars at high speeds (we would know, of course), that we're expecting real-world insurance rates to skyrocket one of these days. Not really. But games like *Project Gotham Racing 2* sure make us want to tear around Barcelona in an Enzo Ferrari, even if our salaries could barely afford Bakersfield in a Saturn. But *Project Gotham Racing 2* has all kinds of cool cars and exotic cities to tool around in. And thanks to Xbox Live, gamers in Bakersfield and Barcelona can now go head to *cabeza*.



GMR ANTI-FREEZE TIP NO. 1

CHECK YOURSELF!

Our Top 3 sentimental hockey favorites, in no particular order or ranking:

- *NHL '95* (Genesis) Just like the movie *Swingers* (in which it was so prominently featured), *NHL '95* was a staple in college dorms across the country. Plus, you could totally make their heads bleed.
- *Blades of Steel* (NES) – Quite simply the best hockey fighting ever.
- *Ice Hockey* (NES) A team of skinny dudes vs. a team of fat dudes. Nuff said.

PUB: NINTENDO//DEV: INTELLIGENT SYSTEMS
CAT: RPG//SUBCAT: STRATEGY
NOVEMBER 2003//GBA

FIRE EMBLEM

//THE BEST RPG SERIES YOU'VE NEVER PLAYED

Intelligent Systems made its latest *Fire Emblem* with newcomers to the series in mind, which is good luck for the thousands of American gamers who have no idea what the hell it is. This is the seventh game in the long-running fantasy strategy series, and the closest it's come to American shores is a couple of cameos in *Super Smash Bros. Melee*.

It's a shame, given the series' record of compelling strategy (similar to Advance Wars) and strong storytelling. This latest *Fire Emblem* features two intertwining campaigns, each with its own hero, and a complex relationship system for building up a versatile party of heroes.



PUB: EIDOS//DEV: ION STORM
CAT: ADVENTURE//SUBCAT: 1ST PERSON
NOVEMBER 2003//PC//XB

DEUS EX 2

//THERE IS A GOD

"This game is about freedom and choices with consequences," says Ion Storm Director Warren Spector. After our hands-on time with the game, we can vouch for that. *Invisible War* gives the player very effective tools—like nanotech-amplified strength, speed, and vision, plus an arsenal with everything from swords to rocket launchers—many of which can be combined in ways the developers haven't foreseen. In one level, we used our souped-up legs to Six Million Dollar Man over a long gap, getting close enough to a gun-toting robot to use our Bot Domination ability, while staying out of its line of sight. Then we went on a rampage, eliminating all of the other guards.

Deus Ex provides that kind of moment-to-moment freedom, but its sequel goes further. "In *Invisible War*, you have a lot more choice in what goals you're trying to accomplish," says Spector. Mutually exclusive missions from the dystopian future's warring factions constantly force you to make choices. Each decision you make opens possible story paths while closing others, earning you both friends and enemies—and shaping your own unique experience with *Invisible War*.



PUB: UBI SOFT//DEV: UBI SOFT MONTREAL
CAT: ACTION//SUBCAT: 1ST PERSON
NOVEMBER 2003//XB

RAINBOW SIX 3

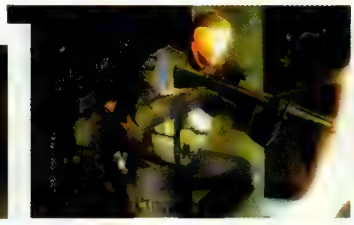
//A TACTICAL POT OF GOLD

Finely toeing the line between tactical sim and straight-up shooter, *Rainbow Six 3* finds stalwart Clancy standby Ding Chavez leading his three-man team into various hotbeds of terrorist activity. If this sounds familiar, know that this is not a port of something you've seen before. *RS3* has been planned from the ground up for console play (Xbox, in this case), and you can feel it from the moment you've taken controller in hand.

Designed to be both accessible and enjoyable to newcomers to the tactical genre, the game features a well-implemented control scheme that other developers would do well to study. Advancing Ding's team is as simple as pointing and clicking the Action button. With the benefit of a straightforward tutorial and a bit of practice, more advanced commands (there's an array of ways to kick in doors; more complex options can also be easily accessed), issued via the right analog stick, soon become second nature.









XB
PC
PS2
GC

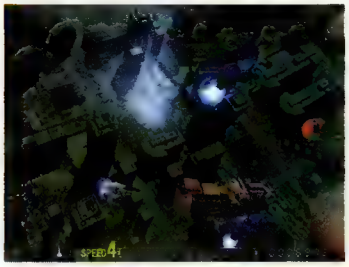
PUB: FRESH GAMES//DEV: IREM
CAT: ACTION//SUBCAT: SHOOTER
JANUARY 2004//PS2

R-TYPE FINAL

//BLOW THE BYDO OUT OF THE SKY ONE MORE TIME, AND THEN HAVE A GOOD CRY

The 2D shooter is going the way of the dodo, but don't tell Irem or Fresh Games, because what they've attempted to create with *R-Type Final* is the shooter to end all shooters. A loving homage to nearly every blaster Irem has ever published, *R-Type Final* (the final game in the series, according to Director Kazuma Kujo) is the most comprehensive and encyclopedic title of its kind.

Featuring nearly every ship from Irem's storied shooter history—including craft from games like *Mr. Heli* and *Image Fight* (although we're sad to note that the submarine from *In the Hunt* does not appear), *R-Type Final* demonstrates immaculate attention to detail. You'll especially see it when you perform precise investigations of each and every ship. Oh, and the actual game is great, too. Don't miss this one when it hits.



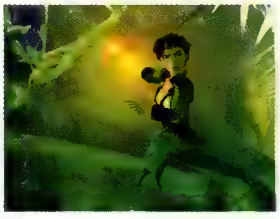
PUB: UBI SOFT//DEV: UBI SOFT FRANCE
CAT: ACTION//SUBCAT: 3RD PERSON
NOVEMBER 2003//GC//PC//PS2//XB

BEYOND GOOD AND EVIL

//TWO FRIENDS AND A ZOOM LENS

In this type of medium, in which heroes advertising their valor and villains is equally archetypal, it's refreshing to find a game that goes beyond good and evil. And on planet Hyllis—*Rayman* creator Michel Ancel's latest playground—nothing is what it seems. The populace's secretive "protectors" aren't to be trusted any more than the invading aliens, and it's up to freelance shutterbug Jade and her *cochon*, er, cohort Pey'j to tease out the truth.

But it's *BG&E*'s astounding array of gameplay types that really goes beyond convention. "It's an extremely open world," says Ancel, "which you see from different points of view." Just as the information Jade gathers changes her once-naïve outlook, so too will the experience of seeing her terrestrial stomping ground from outer space. Whether you're on foot photographing rare fauna for credits, infiltrating government installations à la Solid Snake, patrolling Hyllis' waterways in your hovercraft, or following a lead beyond the edges of the atmosphere, you'll find it's all seamlessly integrated and stunningly executed.



from conception to reality

"GBA eat your heart out."
Official XBOX Magazine July, 2003

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PUB: ELECTRONIC ARTS//DEV: EA
CAT: ACTION//SUBCAT: 3RD PERSON
NOVEMBER 2003//GBA//GC//PS2//XB

JAMES BOND: EON

//LESS SHAKY, MORE STIRRED, FIRST-PERSON, NOT THIRD

James Bond has his moments. Everyone remembers scenes in which he fights for his life against some misshapen minion, hang-glides into the villain's secret lair, or drives a tank through traffic to rescue a damsel in distress. *Everything or Nothing* is the first game in the long-running series that lets us play these characteristic Bond moments, not just watch them.

In the inelegantly titled *Everything or Nothing*, 007 rappels down the side of a burning building, slides a motorcycle under a jackknifed truck, and drives a tank in a *Combat*-esque duel. He fistfights Jaws. He meets (and woos) improbably beautiful supergenius scientists. Bond visits Q's laboratory, flies a helicopter, and thwarts the plans of a megalomaniacal ex-KGB agent. He even walks in (climbs in, actually) on a half-naked woman expecting a massage in a house of uncertain repute in New Orleans. And as Agent 007 performs these feats, what will you do? Do we expect you to watch? No, Mr. Bond—we expect you to play.



PUB: NINTENDO//DEV: NST
CAT: SPORTS//SUBCAT: ACTION
DECEMBER 2003//GC

1080° AVALANCHE

//WHEN WE SHRED, WE SHRED TO WIN

It's hard to believe, but it's been almost six years since *1080° Snowboarding* first wowed gamers on Nintendo 64. Now that over half a decade has passed, the long-overdue sequel, *1080° Avalanche*, is primed to hit GameCube.

Developed by NST (Nintendo Software Technology), which handled the development of *Wave Race: Blue Storm*, *Avalanche* is this winter's best snowboarding option—besides *SSX 3*. A returning cast of characters appears, along with new slopes, new boards, all-new modes, environmental effects (avalanches, get it?), and an exhilarating sense of speed. The only possible downside is that NST has an annoying habit of making overly fussy adjustments to games' controls (see: *Wave Race*). If it can avoid such indulgences with *Avalanche*, we'll be shredding to this fool all winter long.



GMA ANTI-FREEZE TIP NO. 2

WINTER WEAR

Let's face it, only suckers go outside when it's colder than a Swede's butt. While enjoying life in the cold-free indoors, you can further thumb your nose at that bastard Old Man Winter by wearing a scarf (and we are not making this up) that you can microwave to keep you hot, hot, hot. Check it out at www.hotrocks.com.



PUB: LUCASARTS//DEV: PLANET MOON
CAT: ACTION//SUBCAT: 3RD PERSON
NOVEMBER 2003//PC//XB

ARMED AND DANGEROUS

//SHEEPISHLY GOOD FUN! ALSO, A SHARK GUN

Featuring as motley a band of bandits as we've ever seen, this nifty third-person shooter follows the exploits of The Lionhearts, whose members include an anthropomorphic mole, a robot in Centurion's duds, a pint-sized Gollum stand-in, and one very angry man with a Scottish accent. Recent hands-on time revealed smooth controls, comical one-liners, and lots of explosive action.

Easily accessible squad-based action ups the carnage considerably, but issuing commands is pretty simple stuff, so players can concentrate on the running, gunning, and jetting around with the handy backpack booster. Slated for a November release, this ribald fragfest should go down easy with gamers who like their humor black, their excess glorious, and their guns loaded with sharks and...sheep.



NOTE TO SELF:

WATER FAIRY MAKES LOUSY DEFENSE AGAINST GIANT PYRO DRAGON!





Culdcept... The magical card-based, land acquisition video game that has swept Japan and now has its sights set on the USA.

PlayStation®2

TEEN T Fantasy Violence Partial Nudity

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PUB: NINTENDO//DEV: NINTENDO
CAT: RACING//SUBCAT: KART
NOVEMBER 2003//GC

MARIO KART: DOUBLE DASH

//PLUMBERS MAKE GREAT NATURAL RACERS. DON'T YOU THINK?



Time for a show of hands: How many of us didn't spend the majority of our college years throwing back bottles of MGD while racing the night away with *Super Mario Kart* or *Mario Kart 64*? What? Some of you are still in high school? Well, that gives you something to look forward to as you continue the pursuit of higher education (aka skipping class and playing *Mario Kart: Double Dash*).

When we last saw the game, we had some concerns. We saw only three tracks, had no information about the Battle mode, and most troublesome of all, felt the game was too slow. Apparently, a little bit of *F-Zero* rubbed off on the *DD* team, and now Mario and friends have shed some of the junk in their trunks. We've also seen a couple of new tracks as well as some Battle mode stages (one atop a giant GameCube, another racing through classic green pipes).

Tap the keg, *Mario Kart: Double Dash* is almost here.

XB
PC
PS2
GBA
GC

PUB: ELECTRONIC ARTS//DEV: EA
CAT: ACTION//SUBCAT: 3RD PERSON
NOVEMBER 2003//GBA//GC//PC//PS2//XB

LORD OF THE RINGS: ROTK

//THIS TIME YOU GET TO PLAY AS SMALL PEOPLE! WHAT COULD BE BETTER?

Yes, *The Two Towers* is a purely guilty pleasure. Old-school hack-and-slash gameplay has been done many times before, but rarely with such top-notch production values. Now, *Return of the King* gives us a badass playable Gandalf. And lots more.

Even in the films, there's something intangibly cool about watching a few heroes fight 40 orcs at once, and *Return of the King* is finally going to let us live that experience. We're expecting deeper gameplay this time, thanks to the addition of stealth—mostly for new characters Sam and Frodo—plus combo attacks and greater interactivity with the scenery. So, if you've wanted to stick it to Sauron, take heart. *Return of the King* will deliver everything we'd hoped to find in *The Two Towers*.





PUB: ROCKSTAR//DEV: REMEDY
CAT: ACTION//SUBCAT: 3RD PERSON
NOVEMBER 2003//PC//XB

MAX PAYNE 2

//IT'S BULLET TIME. LITERALLY

In spite of its cornball graphic-novel trappings, Remedy's *Max Payne* is as straightforward—and satisfying—as they come. As the titular tortured lawman, players shoot their way through a crime-infested New York with a well-realized slow-motion mode, a handful of pharmaceutical cocktails, and thousands of bullets as their only backup.

The sequel, touted as a love story, finds Max back on the force and once again framed for murder. Femme fatale Mona Sax returns to give the story a mysterious, sultry twist, but otherwise, it's back to the ballistic basics. Max's repertoire of moves and artillery, enemy and NPC A.I., and the Havok physics engine have all been beefed up—which suggests to us that there will be plenty of reloading the especially harrowing sequences solely to savor again the sweet cacophony of gunplay. Assuming Remedy doesn't stray too far from course, a little more *Payne* can only be a good thing.



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FEATURE

侵食汚染 .hack Part 3 OUTBREAK™

In the 3rd chapter of the .hack saga, "The World" continues to deteriorate as the virus spreads out of control, and crosses the increasingly transient line separating "The World" and reality. As Kite, you must battle your way through "The World" before it implodes. In fact, you're faced with the possibility that this virus might be unstoppable.

Luckily for us, the .hack series is a simulated MMORPG, so at least the virus can't spread to this world!

publisher **Bandai**//developer **Cyber Connect 2**
genre **Simulated MMORPG**//release date **Fall 2003**

In OUTBREAK, you'll fight your way through contaminated servers and eliminate enemies. The plot thickens, and the story draws you in further as you try to uncover the cause of this debilitating virus and rescue your friend Orca, who's still in a coma.

I love part 3 and am addicted to the completely original gaming experience that .hack offers. I enjoyed part 1, and became addicted with part 2. The battles and story intensified, and the cast grew to include online/offline players. Moreover, the simulation of playing an online game



A great story and addictive gameplay.



Encounter characters from the animated TV series.

deepened with emails and news items that drew me further into "The World".

This series keeps getting better and better, plus you also get a new episode of the original video animation of ".hack//LIMINALITY" in the same box.

Bring on .hack 4! Keep your eye on **www.dothack.com** for more details.

-Orca, Web News, Altimit.

Abrasive False Tragedy



TEEN T Mature Sexual Themes Mild Language Violence CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

.hack//SIGN

As seen on CARTOON NETWORK

PlayStation 2

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(s03)

PUB: SEGA//DEV: SONIC TEAM
CAT: ACTION//SUBCAT: PLATFORMER
JANUARY 2004//GC//XB//PS2

SONIC HEROES

//THE SPIRIT OF TEAMWORK, AS EVIDENCED BY COLORFUL RODENTIA

Here's something to think about: The Sega Saturn had no true *Sonic* platformer games, while Nintendo GameCube will soon have at least three. Doesn't it just boggle the mind?

Sonic Heroes finds the blue bomber taking a break from the *Adventure* series and teaming up with a host of classic *Sonic* characters. There are four teams, each with its own style of play; you control three characters at a time, and whoever is leading the formation determines its dominant ability. For example, Sonic's specialty is speed, Knuckles has power, and Tails can fly short distances. Sound complicated? It's not. You're really controlling only one character while the other two follow, and the simple press of a button switches your formation. Expect the standard insane speed and crazy level design we all know and love...just with a new twist.



PUB: THQ//DEV: YUKE'S
CAT: SPORTS//SUBCAT: ACTION
NOVEMBER 2003//PS2

WWE SMACKDOWN

//NEVER HAS TOUCHING A MOIST MAN BEEN SO EXCELLENT

THQ's *Pain* is wrestling fans' pleasure. With *WWE Smackdown: Here Comes the Pain*, THQ and Yuke's pack more than 60 past and present WWE superstars into a game that's beautifully brutal and vastly improved from last year's model.

Badass Goldberg hops on a motorcycle, grabs the hated Iron Sheik, and begins to drag his foe behind him. Female brawlers Stacy Keibler and Sable attempt to rip each other's clothes off in an all-new Bra and Panties match. Rey Mysterio tries to slam the behemoth The Big Show only to find himself, to put it politely, SOL. This time, *Smackdown* recognizes that a tiny wrestler won't be able to lift a huge one, and it acts accordingly.

There will be blood and six-man Elimination Chamber matches. Ten years' worth of classic WWE/WWF story lines have been added to the game's Story mode to ensure at least 50 hours of play without seeing the same thing twice. Paintastic.



PUB: ELECTRONIC ARTS//DEV: EA BLACK BOX
CAT: RACING//SUBCAT: FREESTYLE
NOVEMBER 2003//GC//PS2//XB

NFS: UNDERGROUND

//THE UNABASHED THRILL OF DRIVING ILLICIT VEHICLES.

EA's a relative latecomer to the urban-racing genre (already explored at length by the *Tokyo Xtreme Racer* and *Midnight Club* franchises), and it's quite obviously inspired by the success of *The Fast and the Furious*—but when a game is this spectacular, who cares about dubious motivation? An Oscar-nominated special-effects artist was brought in to work with *Underground*'s visual team, resulting in the best-looking nighttime races in the history of gaming, with graphics we didn't know PS2 was capable of cranking out and a sensation of speed you've never seen in a racing game.

The amazing visuals would be worth diddly-squat if the game didn't control well, but *Underground*'s handling is extremely tight; it feels as good as it looks. The customization options are insane, with 20 licensed cars and almost two dozen licensed brands of aftermarket gear. There's even four-player online action to match *Midnight Club II*. If *Gran Turismo*'s gameplay structure is a lifelong love affair, *Underground*'s is a yearlong string of one-night stands with a succession of supermodels.





ORDINARY?
NOT
INTERESTED.



NOT YOUR ORDINARY GAME

TONY HAWK'S UNDERGROUND

PS2, XBX, GC

The most popular extreme sports series of all time, Tony Hawk's Pro Skater is undergoing a massive overhaul as the developers have decided to cross it with...Grand Theft Auto? Tony Hawk's Underground (the latest game in the series) is redefining what it means to be a sports title. In Underground, players can get off their board and can go anywhere—exploring eight expansive levels on foot or in a vehicle. Go for a joyride or climb to the tops of buildings, all to find new lines to skate or places to drop in from.

Instead of playing as a sponsored skater with legions of fans, players can import a picture of their own face into the game and start literally from scratch. Gamers can create not only their own parks to skate in, but they can even create their own tricks and trade 'em with friends. Tony Hawk was a trailblazer the first time he ever set foot on a skateboard, and Tony Hawk's Underground continues the trend.
(Helmet not included.)



BREAK OUT OF THE ORDINARY

Nestlé Butterfinger bar





SWEET CODES

SSX TRICKY

PS2, XBX, GC

SUPER BOOST
Do Uber tricks until the letters (T-R-I-C-K-Y) on top of your Adrenaline Bar are filled in red and your meter will stay full giving you unlimited boost and let you do Uber tricks with no time limit.

CHEAT MODE
At the title screen, hold L1 + R1 and press X, Triangle, Right, Circle, Square, Down, Triangle, Square, Left, Circle, X, Up. Release L1 + R1 and if you entered the code correctly, you will hear a sound.

Note: A cheat menu will not appear, but all players, outfits, boards and levels will be unlocked.

FULL STAT POINTS
At the title screen, hold L1 + R1 and press Triangle(2), Right, Triangle(2), Down, X(2), Left, X(2), Up. Release L1 + R1 and if you entered the code correctly, you will hear a sound. All the boarders will now have full stat points.



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WEAR OUT TRICKS

VIRTUA FIGHTER 4 EVOLUTION

PS2 XBX GC

AVF1 MODELS
In Quest Mode, go to the Shop and look in the Other category to buy the VF1 models. After you select your character on the Character Select screen, press and hold P+K to use the old character models in Arcade or VS mode.

RANKINGS
While your rank is still a "kyu," you will earn experience for each of your matches, and will earn a promotion with each 100 experience points.

GAIN ITEM (VARIOUS)
With any character, let your opponent perform reversals on you, and lose the match. If you get hit by more than twice the number of reversals than the number of rounds, you'll pick up some interesting items!

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PUB: SQUARE ENIX//DEV: SQUARE ENIX
CAT: RPG//SUBCAT: MASSIVELY MULTIPLAYER
NOVEMBER 2003//PC//PS2

FINAL FANTASY XI

//NOW THE HERO IS YOU. OR IS IT "YOU IS THE HERO, NOW"?

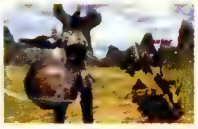
If Square Enix has its way, you'll be playing this game for the next 15 years. Yes, *Final Fantasy XI* is an MMORPG, one of those interminable gaming addictions made popular by the likes of *EverCrac...*er, *EverQuest*.

Final Fantasy XI's basic gameplay may look familiar, but there are a number of *Final Fantasy* touches to entice series fans. Expect to see airships, chocobos, and summoners aplenty. There is a story here, too, but now, you'll need actual people to help you complete it, instead of that hint book. Oh, and unlike *EverQuest*, it's really pretty.

Final Fantasy takes its first steps online in late October on PC, with the more-expensive PS2 version hitting in January with a bundled hard drive. Both will cost $12.95 a month after your free month is up, so start saving your gil now.







PUB: MICROSOFT GAMES//DEV: POWER AND MAGIC DEVELOPMENTS
CAT: SPORTS//SUBCAT: SIMULATION
NOVEMBER 2003//XB

TOP SPIN

//LET US NOT MAKE ANOTHER JOKE INVOLVING "BALLS"

Sega's *Virtua Tennis*, as brilliant as it is, could soon lose its No. 1 ranking among tennis games. *Top Spin Tennis* from Microsoft Game Studios takes the highly accessible formula that works so well for Sega (namely, simple control and fast arcade action), pumps up the graphics, smooths out the animation, and adds XSN-enhanced online play via Live.

Apparently, Microsoft thought *Virtua Tennis* was a little too simple, so it added high-risk/low-percentage strokes that are performed with the right trigger. If you time it right, there's little your opponent can do to recover. But if you swing too early or too late, you'll end up either eating net or knocking over beer cups in the 17th row—and audiences rarely applaud that.

It's pretty, it's online, and it's the only way Anna K. will ever win a tournament. Sorry, darlin'.



PUB: SCEA//DEV: ZIPPER
CAT: SHOOTER//SUBCAT: 3RD PERSON
NOVEMBER 2003//PS2

SOCOM 2

//PUTTING BULLETS IN PEOPLE'S HEADS ISN'T NICE. BUT OH WELL!

The follow-up to last year's online-third-person-shooter success story *SOCOM* delivers all the stealthy spec-ops action that made the first game such a fan favorite—without the dimwitted antics of your well-meaning but often fatally inefficient sidekick (good-bye, Boomer).

New features such as turrets enhance the multiplayer action, which includes two new modes (Breach and Escort) and lobby voice-chat. Plus, extra shrubbery gives would-be snipers more places to hide. It sounds like a small addition, but trust us—it makes a big difference. And Zipper has implemented various methods of screwing the jerkheads who corrupted the joy of online play with their Gameshark abuse. Eat that.



GMR ANTI-FREEZE TIP NO. 3

DEAD 'N LOVING IT?

Grizzled albino rocker Edgar Winter may, or may not, be dead; we can't be sure. Winter, along with his similarly albino brother Johnny, gained fame in the 1970s for such popular rock hits as "Frankenstein," inspired by Mary Shelley's fictional doctor who created, not coincidentally, a living monster from a



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PUB: NAMCO//DEV: NAMCO
CAT: RACING//SUBCAT: ARCADE
NOVEMBER 2003//GC//PS2//XB

R:RACING EVOLUTION

//YOU'D NEVER DO THIS KIND OF CRAP TO YOUR OWN CAR, YOU BIG WUSS

We still can't get our heads 'round the fact that Namco is doing a semi-sim/semi-arcade racing game, taking on *Gran Turismo* and *Need for Speed* in one fell swoop. We especially can't fathom it when you consider that the company's *Ridge Racer* series is already near perfect. But you can be sure we'll still check it out.

Unlike *Ridge Racer*, *R: Racing Evolution* is platform agnostic, which should make everyone feel like having a cup of cocoa. There are also 30-plus cars, real-world tracks, and the Racing Life mode that features two hot babe-o-sauruses getting catty with each other. It's a rivalry, boys, and as we all know, the only way for a girl to settle things is by burning some rubber on the track! Need we say more?



XB
PC
PS2
GC



PUB: SIERRA//DEV: VALVE/RITUAL
CAT: SHOOTER//SUBCAT: 1ST PERSON
NOVEMBER 2003//PC

COUNTERSTRIKE: CONDITION ZERO

//SQUEEZE THE TRIGGER. DON'T PULL

Counter-Strike is a classic Cinderella story. It began life as a user-created modification for the classic *Half-Life*; it's been around for years (through many incarnations) but remains ridiculously popular. The game pits two teams (terrorists vs. counterterrorists) against each other round after round as they slaughter each other, then are miraculously reborn. Now, it's getting the single-player treatment, with missions and a story line, along with graphical upgrades and a whole slew of new weapons and toys. Heck, they're even bringing the original multiplayer version to Xbox Live, and if it does for that what it did for online PC gaming, then watch out Bill Gates' wallet. You're about to get fat!





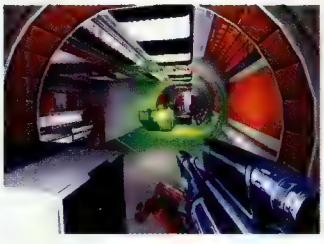


PUB: SIERRA//DEV: MONOLITH
CAT: SHOOTER//SUBCAT: 1ST PERSON
NOVEMBER 2003//PC

NOLF: CONTRACT J.A.C.K.

//PREQUELS NEED LOVIN' TOO, YO

The hilarious first-person-shooter series spoofing '60s spy movies is back on the PC with this prequel (set between the events of *NOLF* and *NOLF 2*)—but this time, you play from the side of the bad guys. In *Contract J.A.C.K.* (*Just Another Contract Killer*), you're John Jack, a minion of evil organization H.A.R.M. whose mission it is to take down another evil organization that's horning in on H.A.R.M.'s action. New weapons, items, enemies, and vehicles abound across *J.A.C.K.*'s 10 single-player levels—and if you're lucky, you might run into a certain sexy English superspy. No, we don't mean George Lazenby.





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PUB: SQUARE ENIX//DEV: SQUARE ENIX
CAT: RPG//SUBCAT: FOXY
DECEMBER 2003//PS2

FINAL FANTASY X-2

//YOU GOT YOUR CHARLIE'S ANGELS IN MY FINAL FANTASY!

That Tidus guy must have made quite an impression on Lady Yuna (or, *Final Fantasy X*'s sales numbers must have made quite an impression on Square Enix execs). For the first time (and not the last, see this month's International Report), Square Enix is making a direct sequel to a *Final Fantasy* game, as Yuna and the rest of the familiar crew set out to discover what really happened to Tidus at the end of *FFX*.

The game is broken down into plot-related yet independent missions, where Yuna, Rikku, and new girl Paine search for spheres scattered throughout the world of Spira. *X-2* is definitely more action-based than its prequel, with Yuna now having the ability to hop around obstacles in the overworld (stand aside, Lara) and a revamped battle system that emphasizes constant combat activity.



GMR ANTI-FREEZE TIP NO. 4

WHY SO S.A.D.?

get the most out of your daylight savings:
1) Play *Boktai* in 13-degree weather while wearing boots...and nothing else.
2) Invest in a hot tub. Everybody loves hot tubs.
3) If you can't warm the body, warm the soul.
4) Vacation in Hawaii. And if that's too expensive, just learn the ukulele.
5) Start life over as a golf pro in South Florida.

XB

PS2

GC

PUB: UBI SOFT//DEV: UBI SOFT MONTREAL
CAT: ACTION//SUBCAT: 3RD PERSON
NOVEMBER 2003//GC//PS2//XB

PRINCE OF PERSIA

//MAKE NO MISTAKE—HE'S WEARING PANTALOONS

There hasn't been an action game this magical in years. Inspired by the classic 2-D *Prince of Persia* platformers, *Sands of Time* mixes classic Arabic architecture with modern cinematic sophistication, finding equal but different types of beauty in dark shadows and bright magic spells. You might even recognize some of the lighting tricks from UBI Montreal's earlier *Splinter Cell*. But *Prince*'s characters move and fight with superior grace, and the camera work has that little something special that sets AAA-games apart from the rest.

Yet what really hooked us was the comfortable but just different enough 3D control scheme that lets players actually enjoy learning new techniques. From swinging on wood poles to running up walls, you'll quickly find the acrobatic Prince doing all sorts of tricks, and will need them to find your way into and out of some intimidating architecture. SCE Europe was wowed enough by *Sands of Time* to buy holiday exclusivity for the PS2 version. Xbox and GameCube owners here should soon feel blessed that SCEA didn't follow suit.



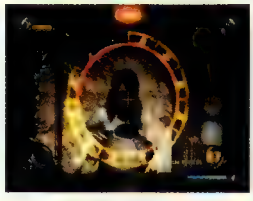
PUB: TECMO//DEV: TECMO
CAT: ACTION//SUBCAT: SURVIVAL-HORROR
NOVEMBER 2003//PS2

FATAL FRAME II

//IT MIGHT HELP IF YOU STRAP ON SOME DEPENDS™

Want real chills this holiday season? Then prepare for the most frightening time of your life. Malevolent spirits abound in what may very well be the nightmare to end them all. Unlike the rocket-propelled zombie shock of the *Resident Evil* series or the overly gory meat circus of *Silent Hill*, *Fatal Frame II: Crimson Butterfly* makes its mark on the survival-horror genre with a pure icy terror that channels the cinematic pulse of *The Ring*, rather than relying on the cheap machinations the genre is typically known for. The soul-sealing phototechnics of the first game return, while twin sisters Mio and Mayu are introduced as the game's protagonists (with the assistance of an imprisoned but helpful ghostlike boy). Set two decades prior to the original *Fatal Frame*, *Crimson Butterfly* doubles the fear factor with 10 blood-curdling acts, an all-new graphics engine (good for rendering slithering devil babies who run through walls), and a 5.1 sound setup that will undoubtedly chill you to the core.





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TEEN T CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
Mild Language
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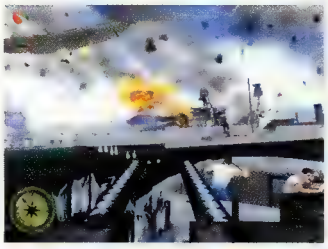
PUB: ELECTRONIC ARTS//DEV: EA
CAT: SHOOTER//SUBCAT: 1ST PERSON
NOVEMBER 2003//GC//PC//PS2//XB

MEDAL OF HONOR

//IF WE'RE GOING TO PLAY WWII-ERA GAMES, CAN WE PAY WWII-ERA PRICES?

To tell the truth, we feel a little guilty whenever we complain about the overabundance of World War II games. It's sort of like getting yelled at in history class for not paying attention to one of the most significant events in the history of all mankind. But despite its sobering nature, WWII continues to provide excellent source material for entertaining videogames.

The *Medal of Honor* series, in particular, is known for solid gameplay and attention to historical detail. EA promises a bigger emphasis on the cinematic narrative of the story as we travel across the globe to the Pacific theater in *Rising Sun* and *Pacific Assault*. (The former is the PS2 version, while the latter is for PC.) Kicking off both games is the dreadful Pearl Harbor attack—watching scores of Japanese Zeros dive-bombing the U.S. fleet as you try to pick them out of the sky with your .50 caliber is, quite simply astonishing.



XB
PC
PS2
GBA
GC

PUB: NINTENDO//DEV: NINTENDO
CAT: RPG//SUBCAT: GOOFY
NOVEMBER 2003//GBA

MARIO & LUIGI

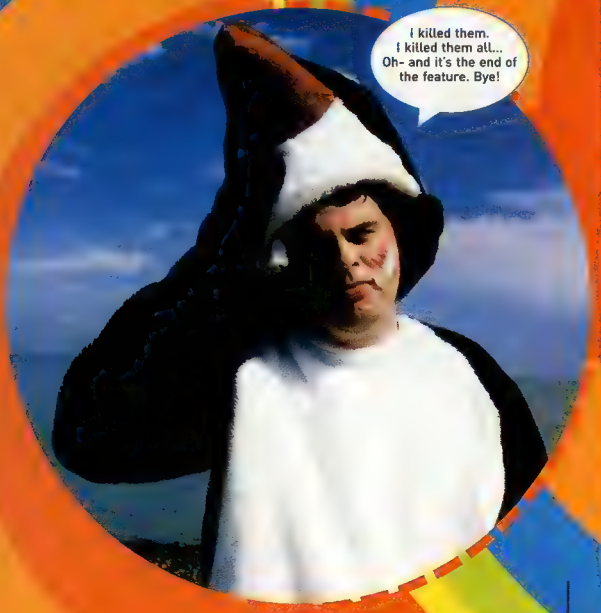
//OH BROTHER, WHEREFORE ART THOU? OH, YOU'RE RIGHT BEHIND ME

When Nintendo describes *Mario & Luigi* as the spiritual successor to *Paper Mario*, we get all warm in the overalls. An RPG for people who might not necessarily like RPGs is something we need more of.

It's been a long time since the brothers have worked together (in a non-alternating fashion, at least), and *Mario & Luigi* puts heavy emphasis on cooperation between the two plumbers in combat as well as the overworld map. With each character mapped to a single button, there'll be many instances where you'll have to combine two abilities in order to progress, or to perform combo moves during battle.

The story doesn't deviate much from the standard light-hearted fare of Mario games past, but the dialogue and situations in *Mario & Luigi* seem to be much funnier and more irreverent. If the ability to change pants during the game doesn't illustrate this, then we got two words for you: 'stache power.





PUB: TECMO DEV: TEAM NINJA
CAT: ACTION//SUBCAT: 3RD PERSON
JANUARY 2004//XB

NINJA GAIDEN

//YOU HAVEN'T REALLY LIVED UNTIL YOU'VE EATEN FOOT

Any niggling doubts we had about *Ninja Gaiden* (even after its jaw-dropping E3 demonstration) were deftly minced, mashed, and dashed when Team Ninja head Tomonubu Itagaki dropped by for a visit. He came for the Korean BBQ and karaoke but stuck around long enough for us to sample the goods.

We scurried along walls and zig-zagged from floor to floor effortlessly, battering demonic beetles with nunchakus, all to the accompaniment of a sweeping symphonic score. We peppered scores of ninja with sizzling, explosive shuriken, then eviscerated them where they stood, stunned and smoking. We clobbered clawed beasts with a man-sized war-hammer and flung them against polished, marble walls. We marveled at the magnificently rendered backgrounds (courtesy of the 10-strong team responsible for *DOA*'s lavish backgrounds), including a medieval Japanese fortress, a lavish library, and a shiny, marbled temple, and replete with just about every effect in the book. We left the meeting exhausted, exhilarated, and dreaming of when we'd get our grubby, grabby mitts on some final code.



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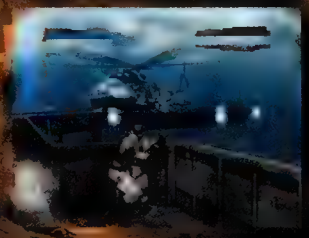
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DRAKENGARD

WARFARE ON A GRAND SCALE IN SQUARE ENIX'S ANSWER TO PANZER DRAGOON AND DYNASTY WARRIORS







← Before Caim even gets to waste a single enemy with the dragon, he must first rescue it. After he liberates the fallen beast, it's serious trouble for anyone who gets in their way.

It's taken a little while now, but the seeds of the Square Enix merger are starting to come to fruition. Sure, the two companies have had the *Final Fantasy* and *Dragon Warrior* series to rely on separately, but once you look past those giant franchises, you see that most of their other games have struggled to achieve similar levels of notoriety. That's all about to change now that Square Enix is set to let loose upon the masses an action game designed to end all action games. A furious spiritual combination of hardcore fan favorites *Panzer Dragoon* and *Dynasty Warriors*, *Drakengard* attempts to redefine the notion of just what an action game can be.

CARPE DIEM

So what is *Drakengard* about, anyway? Despite the chaotic nature of the game, as evidenced in these screens, *Drakengard* is a rather structured affair. You assume the role of the game's principal protagonist, Caim, a soldier whose parents were killed by a dragon when he was only a child. Once a few key events in the opening segments set up your fateful encounter with the Red Dragon, you're quickly off on an adventure that incorporates high-flying aerial battles, as well as ground-based missions in which you do battle with, literally, thousands of enemy warriors.

DEAD RECKONING

The *Panzer Dragoon* references come in during the parts where you take to the skies and do battle with a wide variety of airborne foes. Owing much to the "steam punk" milieu that seems so popular with medievalesque fantasy games like *Drakengard*, the game's ships seem more like boats (of the man-of-war variety) than actual aircraft. Other lofty targets (like other dragons) occupy the clouds for the Red Dragon to shoot down individually with fiery blasts of breath or, in one of the more *Panzer*-like moves, obliterate with a screen-clearing lock-on attack, which can simultaneously target more than a dozen enemies.

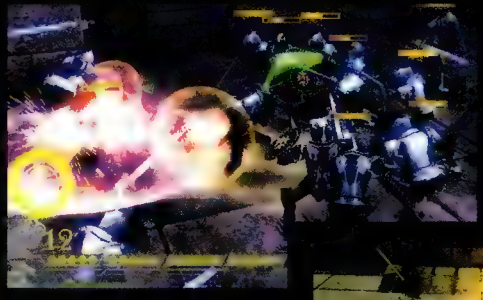
Since the similarities to *Panzer Dragoon* are prominent among the features *Drakengard* shares with Sega's game are a lock-on system, overdrive meter, and dragon growth system), we asked Takamasa Shiba, the producer for *Drakengard* at Square Enix, if that particular series was an influence. Shiba-san tells us, "Very true. The main programmer on the team worked on *Ace Combat*, so there you go. But while *Panzer Dragoon* is a rail shooter, *Drakengard*'s strength in Dogfight mode is that it's like a flight simulator that lets you fly anywhere."

Seeing the dragon in flight is more impressive than the screenshots let on—as you soar through the sky, the dragon's wings ripple as the wind buffers them. Likewise, the sense of air rushing all around you is tangible when you nose-dive from higher elevations. Was creating a realistic flight engine difficult for the team? "That was one of the most difficult tasks we had in creating the game," Shiba explains. "It's not the combat engine, but the system that lets you get on and off the dragon that made it a very high-level engine. I'd like to consider this engine the most amazing part of the entire game."

During the dogfight sequences, when not busy dodging gunfire, the eagle-eyed gamer might notice the hyperrealistic →

PS2





← Stuck in the middle of a crowd of unruly soldiers? No problem! If you can chain together 15 hits, a green health orb will appear for the taking. Keep the chains going and you'll earn even stronger HP orbs.



→ Even in the face of insurmountable odds, all is not lost. Caim can find more than 60 weapons, each of which handles very differently, gains experience, and can be leveled up four times. Every weapon also has a powerful special attack, giving Caim many offensive options.

MAPQUEST

While flying around during the game's "strafing" levels, it's not long before even the most alert dragon rider becomes somewhat disoriented, which can be a problem when you're trying to pinpoint the dozens of mandatory targets on the battlefield.

Fortunately, *Drakengard* has a handy solution in its overhead map, which is activated by pressing the R3 button on the Dual Shock and. Although we would have preferred a transparent aerial map on the actual in-game screen, the default map gets the job done, giving you a clean, functional look at the remaining number of troops on the field.







→ Although Caim is much quicker than the opposition and has some helpful evasive moves, he still has to watch out for the occasional cheap shot from behind. Always watch your six.

ground textures and geography. That can be attributed to the participation of Cavia, the production team behind *Drakengard*, whose staff features former members of the *Ace Combat* development team. This photo-realistic attention to detail helps anchor a game whose very subject material could have made it too fantastical for its own good.

PS2

DONNYBROOK

Don't let this fool you, however, into thinking the whole game takes place above the clouds. When you're not gliding on thermals, you're either strafing ground forces with swirling air blasts or battling hundreds of foot soldiers with fire blasts or a charged-up volcanic supernova) and duking it out *mano a mano* with the surging masses in the game's other primary combat offering, the Melee mode.

It is during these melee encounters that thoughts of *Dynasty Warriors* will dance through your head. As a lone soldier tasked with repelling thousands of enemy forces, dozens of which appear onscreen at any given time, you'll wonder if this isn't a deliberate nod to Koei's long-running franchise. "If we are to talk about massive combat, then yes, I was influenced by those games," Shiba-san elaborates. "I think that's a new way of playing made possible only by high-spec machines like the PS2. I can see more games outside of *Dynasty Warriors* and *Gungrave* in the future that will have a similar style."

Fortunately for Caim, one of the elements that makes *Drakengard* so engaging is that he can find 64-plus weapons throughout his travels, with each one having unique attributes and moves. "All of the weapons have their own characteristics, and a weapon's level will increase as you defeat enemies," Shiba explains. "As a weapon's level increases, its number of combos, damage, and reach will also increase. Also, magic is sealed in each weapon—for example, the first Caim sword has a fireball power—and this magic power will go up with each level increase. I recommend the one called 'Takamasa.' It's named after me!"

UNCATEGORIZABLE

Scheduled for release in early 2004 (late February/early March), *Drakengard* is not a game that can be finished quickly. The game is 13 chapters deep, 60 missions long—and that's not counting repeat visits to areas previously beaten or the optional side quests offered. This should serve to calm any fears triggered by comparisons to *Panzer Dragoon*, whose games are particularly brief. If anything, *Drakengard* is comparable in length to the *Dynasty Warriors* games.

Not just an action game, not quite an RPG, *Drakengard* is a pure hybrid of genres that works well where others have failed. "*Drakengard* intertwines elements of various genres," Shiba-san tells us. "If I may say, when you take various aspects of games and blend them well, you get *Drakengard*. Having grown up with games (I'm currently 28), I have a very low threshold when it comes to bad ones. I think that rather than categorizing games, the highest priority should be on whether they are fun and intriguing. That's why *Drakengard* is the way it is. Categorizing it as an action-RPG shows off only one aspect of its many strengths." IE

IT'S FUN TO COOK ENEMY SOLDIERS ROTISSERIE STYLE! NEWS AT 11.







← Using fire breath on little dudes from the relative safety of the skies never, ever gets old. Of course, blowing ships out of the clouds is cool, too.



XBOX

Back... in black.



GMR

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NOW

REVIEWS YOU CAN TRUST

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HOW WE RATE

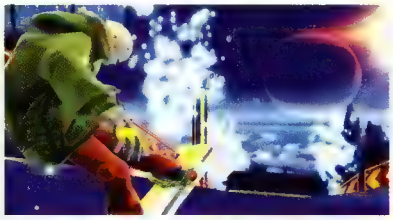
YOUR GUIDE TO THE GMR SCORING SYSTEM

At *GMR*, we slather on games like they are Lancome self-tanning lotion. Or Jello. If we say something is a straight trip to the toilet, then flush it. If we award it our prestigious Essential Selection award, then you can walk right on down to your nearest game store and declare your independence with cash. Live free.

1 KING OF CRAP 2 WASTEOID 3 BROKEN 4 MEDIOCRE 5 AVERAGE 6 GOOD STUFF 7 RECOMMENDED 8 EXCELLENT 9 MUST-HAVE 10 TIMELESS CLASSIC

WARNING!! WHERE MULTIPLE VERSIONS OF A GAME ARE REVIEWED, *GMR* WILL MENTION DIFFERENCES ONLY IF THEY SIGNIFICANTLY AFFECT THE GAMEPLAY!





→ One nice, simple addition to the formula: Jamming on the boost after a spill gets you upright and on your way in a jiffy.



SURF'S UP!

Broadband-equipped PS2 owners will be happy to know that *SSX 3* features a voice-enabled online mode borrowed from EA's *Madden* system, and that it looks and plays as smoothly as the single-player action. Players can enter their customized characters (butterfly wings, anyone?) in ranked or unranked rounds of racing or freestyle competition. The catch? Only two players can hook up at a time. Sure, we'd be happy with more, but there's always next time....





SSX 3

ROCKY MOUNTAIN HIGH

TEEN | PS2 [REVIEWED] | GC | XBOX

PUBLISHER: EA
DEVELOPER: EA CANADA
PRICE: $49.99
RELEASE: OCTOBER 2003
PLAYERS: 1-2
ORIGIN: CANADA

At their best, the best of games ensnare their fans, turning fondness into frenzied fixation. Packed with powder, snaky rails, and glossy half-pipes that hurtle players sky-high, the eagerly awaited third *SSX* works overtime to make addicts of armchair athletes, "extreme" or otherwise.

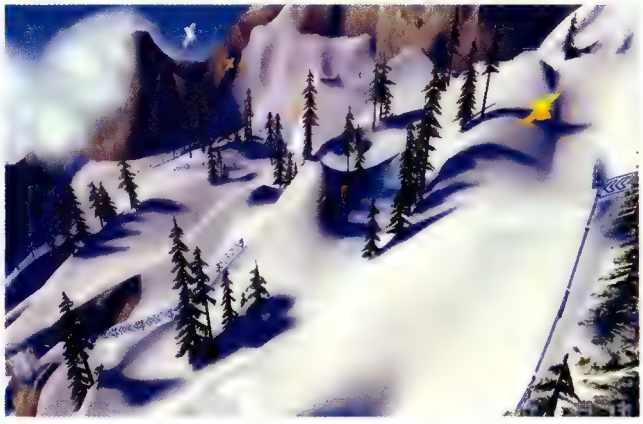
Since its inception, the series has enabled gamers to indulge in the sort of powderfest that only dreams (and games) are made of. This third iteration carries the torch with gravity-defying acrobatics, heart-stopping free falls, and dizzying rail slides, all to the accompaniment of kaleidoscopic audiovisual effects and a thumping selection of hipper-than-thou music. Whether it's speed or stunts, manic or mellow, big air or backcountry, *SSX 3* does it all, and it does it all with style.

While the first two games sent players globetrotting for points and prestige, *SSX 3* is set against a single colossal mountain. It's an open-ended playground where the only limitations are the player's skill...and gravity. The mountain's divided into three peaks that get consecutively nastier as they make their way to the top. By the end, players will find themselves skirting around gaping chasms and outracing avalanches while being battered senseless by Mother Nature's best.

Each peak features Race and Freestyle modes; each mode has goals to be met and records to be beat. Players spend cash on stats, gear, attire, and special effects (such as a flaming head), as well as plenty of other extras—both nifty and inane. When these challenges get too grueling,







→ How big is big? Says EA: The uppermost of the three peaks reaches 18,000 meters. Measly Mt. Everest tops out at about 8000.

CHILL OUT!

Blowing dough on powder is so gauche; here are some other things to do with your cash:

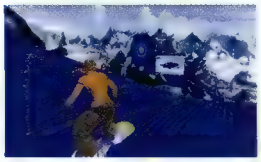
DRESS TO IMPRESS!
All-new extra equippable items equals customize-o-rama! Hit the slopes sporting your best head, shoulders, knees, and threads.



FIND FAMILIAR FACES!
Unlock the entire selection of boarders from previous *SSX* games, as well as some unconventional contenders. Others will have to be earned...



KILL THE DJ!
SSX 3's new DJ is one of the game's few lamentable additions. Purchase and populate your playlist with moody electronica and mall-rat "punk."



XB

PS2

GC

players can sample the 150-plus BIG challenges that dot the mountainside; each short course helps players sharpen specific skills. As before, the control is sublime, the camera perfectly placed. The vaunted variety of snow-types is no gimmick either—it's an incredibly palpable, almost physical, experience.

From psychedelic snow parks to intricately illuminated ice grottos, so much attention has been lavished on the mountain's myriad surfaces that the lovingly crafted character animations, slick interface, and steady 60fps seem almost secondary. Flashy beams of light trace players' paths as they boost by the competition, while fireworks erupt at the apex of especially grand jumps. Screenshots simply cannot convey the sheer splendor of *SSX 3* in motion.

Series' fans will surely hit the slopes with lofty expectations, and *SSX 3* tweaks its bag of tricks enough so as not to disappoint. Uber Tricks are back; Super and Rail-based Ubers provide experienced players with even more outrageous options, without overly complicating things for newcomers. With the addition of board presses and handplants, even novice players should be stringing together elaborate combos in little time—but even if you don't know what you're doing, the inevitable accidental showstopper will have you working to remedy that.

The biggest, baddest things in life often seem small at first (say, the tip of an innocuous iceberg); *SSX 3* is "just a snowboarding game," but there's so much more than the frosty icing to this towering three-tiered cake. So sample the goods—you'll be hooked.

_David Chen

GMR NIPPY! 9/10

BETTER THAN: EVER
SOUNDS LIKE: CHATTERING TEETH
WAIT FOR IT: 1080 AVALANCHE

2ND OPINION

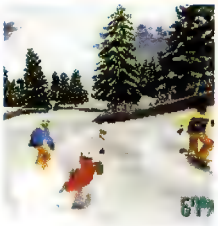
SSX3 shows that EA has really hit that whole collection thing on the head. I love games that keep giving you small rewards for playing, and *SSX3*'s thousand-plus extras are merely a bonus on top of an already great game.

_James Mielke

TOP 5 SNOWBOARDING GAMES

WHEN WE WANT TO SHRED, WE DON'T MESS AROUND. GMR RATES THE FIVE BEST BOARDERS

COOL BOARDERS 2

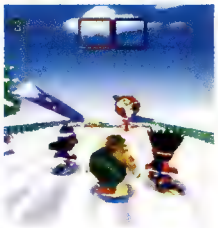


TEEN | SCEA | PS1

The second game by the talented team of developers who practically invented the genre, *Cool Boarders 2* solves many of the first game's problems—including track selection, collision problems, and the depth of features—while adding innovative (for the time) elements like user-customizable snowboards, an improved graphics engine, a half-pipe, a big-air contest, and two-player splitscreen action. Great for tugging around with your PSone.

No. 05

SNOWBOARD KIDS 2



EVERYONE | ATLUS | NINTENDO 64

One of the most underrated games to appear on N64 (and a viable candidate for our Retro/Active section), Atlus' *Snowboard Kids* and its sequel took *Mario Kart*'s multiplayer fun to the slopes. With wacky weapons and inventive course design coming into play (sometimes you're not even racing on snow), the game bounces wildly off-the-wall. Almost like *SSX Jr.*, *Snowboard Kids 2* is lighthearted and childish, but a heckuva lot of fun.

No. 04

SHAUN PALMER'S PRO SNOWBOARDER



EVERYONE | ACTIVISION | GC | PS2 | XB

You know that when you buy one of Activision's signature _____'s *Pro* _____ extreme-sports games, you're getting a quality product. So it goes with snowboarding ace *Shaun Palmer. Pro Snowboarder* was developed by UEP Systems, better known as the *Cool Boarders* developers. When it comes to snow, they're in the know.

No. 03

SSX TRICKY



EVERYONE | EA | GC | PS2 | XBOX

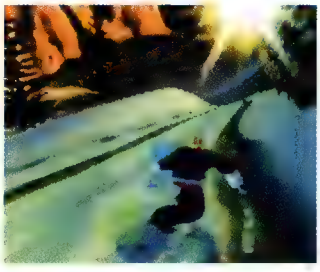
Some might argue that the original *SSX* is the better game. They'd be wrong. The semisequel *Tricky* takes the original's great-tasting Winterfresh flavor and funkifies it by a factor of 10, with new characters and courses, Hollywood voice talent, and a slew of elaborate tricks. It also makes liberal use of Run DMC's *"It's Tricky"* every time you successfully pull off a high-level trick. For some reason, that never gets annoying.

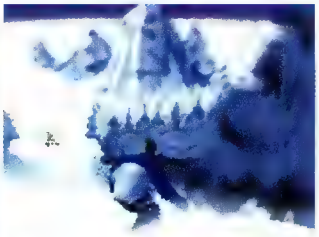
No. 02

1080 SNOWBOARDING

EVERYONE | NINTENDO | NINTENDO 64

At the time—spring 1998, to be precise—Nintendo's *1080° Snowboarding* was the best-looking boarder on the market. For the first time, you could make trails in the snow with your hand as you raced down the mountainside courses through narrow canyons, past (and sometimes through) log cabins, and across frozen rivers.





Once we got used to the whole "press the button to land properly" thing, *1080°* controlled like frosty butter—a great blend of arcade speed and simulation skill. Be it either sliding down the slopes or carving the half-pipe, *1080°*'s superb gameplay couldn't be beat. Action junkies might be inclined to go with the flashier *Tricky* as their No. 1, but we prefer the real (well, close enough to real) thing. While we reminisce about *1080°*, we can't help but be a little concerned about the upcoming GameCube sequel, *1080° Avalanche*. Just as it did with the *Wave Race* franchise, Nintendo has turned over development to the still not completely proven NST team. Let's hope it doesn't change too much—we don't want to fly up north and hurl snowballs at crotches if we don't have to. We pack them with ice.

No. 01

TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR 2004
STROKEWORTHY

GMR ESSENTIAL SELECTION

EVERYONE | XBOX (REVIEWED) | PS2 | PC | GC

Just because golf is a game for old men in pink plaid pants doesn't mean it doesn't make for a good videogame. OK, maybe that's a bit of an unfair characterization. Golf can be cool, but rarely are golf videogames both cool and realistic. However, the latest installment in EA Sports' successful duffing franchise, *Tiger Woods PGA Tour* does both fun and realistic very well with below par results (in golfese, that's good).

On one hand, *Tiger* is a well-designed golf sim that uses a progressive control system (the Total Precision swing system, which has you working the analog stick like a little club, is deceptively intuitive) and features many top pros using equipment from licensed brands like Nike and Ping in real-world locations such as Pebble Beach and St. Andrews. But it's also an enjoyable game with a huge collection element (there are hundreds of different clothes, shoes, and other accessories that will actually have an effect on your stats), unconventional game modes, and fantasy courses and golfers. Put these two together and you've got an addictive, fun golf game you wouldn't be embarrassed to play in front of your dearest friends. Just leave the canary yellow knickerbockers in the closet, OK?

_Tom Price



PUB EA SPORTS | PRICE $49.99
DEV EA SPORTS | PLAYERS 1-4
REL SEPTEMBER 2003 | ORIGIN U.S.A.

GMR HOLE IN ONE 9/10

BETTER THAN: TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR 2003
NOT AS GOOD AS: MARIO GOLF
WAIT FOR IT: TIGER TO WIN AN EVENT NEXT YEAR

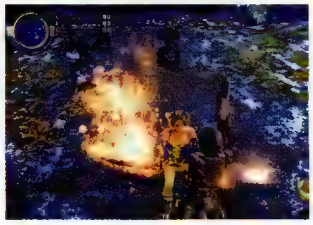
HUNTER: THE RECKONING REDEEMER
GAUNTLET GOES GOTH (AGAIN)

MATURE | XBOX

Last year's *Hunter: The Reckoning* is a fantasy-themed shoot-em-up that combines *Gauntlet*'s kill-everything gameplay with a Goth-flavored pen-and-paper RPG. This year's *Redeemer* addresses most of the original game's shortcomings with more and longer levels, flashier weapons, and nastier enemies. There's a new stat system in which you boost specific attack skills with repeated use and a busty new character named Kaylie who joins the original game's bizarre quartet of cop, biker, raver, and preacher. The best gameplay improvement beyond the addition of various unlockables is a control tweak that makes it easier to change the direction of combo attacks midstream. Also, the notably improved in-game camera shows off *Redeemer*'s souped-up visuals. Xbox Live support is limited to downloadable content, not the needed multiplayer action, but it's great fun while it lasts.

_Zach Meston





PUB VIVENDI UNIVERSAL | PRICE $49.99
DEV HIGH VOLTAGE SOFTWARE | PLAYERS 1-4
REL OCTOBER 2003 | ORIGIN U.S.A.

GMR UNDEADLICIOUS 7/10

BETTER THAN: GOTH ROCK
NOT AS GOOD AS: GLAM ROCK
ALSO TRY: DUNGEONS & DRAGONS HEROES

XB
PC
PS2
GC

WRESTLEMANIA XIX
THROW THE SWEATY MAN

TEEN | GC

Slick and oiled like Hulk Hogan's massive 24-inch pythons, *WWE Wrestlemania XIX* brings Vince McMahon's spandex and steel-chair circus almost to the top of the video mountain. Although the game staggers over the rough terrain of poor design choices, it's a remarkable feat in itself that someone at the WWE had the mental faculties to count to 19.

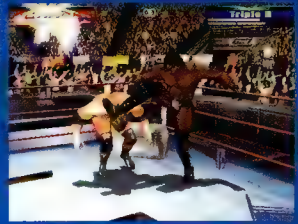
All the top WWE stars are here, from Hunter Hearst Helmsley (aka Triple H, aka The Game) to Hurricane Helms. All the cool themed matches are included, so players can re-create, say, Shawn Michaels vs. The Undertaker in their famed Hell in the Cell match. Objects of the foreign variety, including wooden planks and guitars, can be used to wreak havoc on the pencil-necked geeks. If it's burly, brutal, or blood-inducing, it's likely in the game; *Wrestlemania XIX* won't ever be faulted for a lack of thoroughness.

A well-worn but nonetheless solid grappling engine allows for great flexibility and a wealth of holds, throws, and submissions, and the animations are fluid enough to link the different maneuvers so that players aren't forced to wonder if they're controlling rigid-limbed automatons. Oddly, though, Yuke's employs two separate buttons for blocks when there's clearly no need to use more than one, and it offers no option to modify this scheme.

Nuclear scientists must have cobbled together the game's near impenetrable and absolutely silly Story mode. Here, players as WWE superstars strive to earn a shot at the WWE title by slamming security guards onto cars and knocking construction workers off of ledges and down into bottomless voids. The game awards currency for such feats as making WWE employees bleed, which just like in real life, will happen after about 34 sledgehammer hits.

_Greg Orlando





PUB THQ | PRICE $49.99
DEV YUKE'S | PLAYERS 1-4
REL AVAILABLE NOW | ORIGIN JAPAN

GMR GRIP THIS! 7/10

BETTER THAN: LEGENDS OF WRESTLING II
NOT AS GOOD AS: WRESTLEMANIA 2000
WAIT FOR IT: WWE RAW 2



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a. Obtain a Keyword Search Card: Keyword Search Cards will be distributed at participating Loews Cineplex Theatres nationwide (while supplies last), and at participating GameWorks locations nationwide (while supplies last). Once you have obtained a Keyword Search Card, go to www.ebay.com and enter one of the keywords into the "What are you looking for?" field and select "Find It!" You will then be directed to a form page where you will be asked to enter your e-mail address, date of birth, and the (5) five digit imagine code from your card to play. The results will be instantly displayed. Prize winners will then be asked to provide a mailing address and contact information for prize fulfillment. Winners will be determined based on the date and time of day that the game is played. Five thousand and eight (5008) random, computer-generated, winning times will be generated during the Promotion Period. If you are the first player to play the instant win game at or after one (1) of the randomly generated times, you will be a potential instant winner. Limit: ONE (1) instant win game play per person per e-mail address per day.

b. E! television viewers: Keywords will be announced during television shows on the E! Channel and viewers will be messaged to log on to www.eBay.com/101. Once on the Web page, a five (5) digit imagine code will be displayed, along with the keyword links to the official game page. User will click on one of the links, then they will be directed to a form page where you will be asked to enter your e-mail address, date of birth, and the (5) five digit imagine code from your card to play. The results will be instantly displayed. Prize winners will then be asked to provide a mailing address and contact information for prize fulfillment. Winners will be determined based on the date and time of day that the game is played. Five thousand and eight (5008) random, computer-generated, winning times will be generated during the Promotion Period. If you are the first player to play the instant win game at or after one (1) of the randomly generated times, you will be a potential instant winner. Limit: ONE (1) instant win game play per person per e-mail address per day.

c. Alternate Method of Entry: If you wish to enter without a Keyword Search Card, you may go to www.ebay.com/imagine. Once on this page, a 5 digit imagine code will be displayed, along with the keyword links to the official game page. User will click on one of the links, then they will be directed to a form page where you will be asked to enter your e-mail address, date of birth, and the (5) five digit imagine code from your card to play. The results will be instantly displayed. Prize winners will then be asked to provide a mailing address and contact information for prize fulfillment. Winners will be determined based on the date and time of day that the game is played. Five thousand and eight (5008) random, computer-generated, winning times will be generated during the Promotion Period. If you are the first player to play the instant win game at or after one (1) of the randomly generated times, you will be a potential instant winner. Limit: ONE (1) instant win game play per person per e-mail address per day.

All Methods of Entry: Use of any automated system to participate is prohibited and will result in disqualification. Sponsor is not responsible for late, lost, incomplete, unintelligible, invalid, or misdirected requests, which will be disqualified. Sponsor assumes no responsibility for any computer, telephone, cable, network, satellite, electronic or Internet hardware or software malfunctions, failures, connections, availability, garbled or jumbled transmissions, or service provider/Internet/Web site/use net accessibility or availability, traffic congestion, or unauthorized human intervention or the incorrect or inaccurate capture of entry information, or the failure to capture any such information. In the event of a dispute as to any request or game play, the authorized account holder of the e-mail address used to play will be deemed to be the requestor or player. The "authorized account holder" is the natural person assigned an e-mail address by an Internet access provider, online service provider or other organization responsible for assigning e-mail addresses for the domain associated with the submitted e-mail address. Potential winners may be required to show proof of being the authorized account holder. Sponsor's computer will be the official clock of the instant win game.

5. ALL POTENTIAL WINNING PLAYS ARE SUBJECT TO VERIFICATION BY SPONSOR OR ADMINISTRATOR, WHOSE DECISIONS ARE FINAL. AN ENTRANT IS NOT A WINNER OF ANY PRIZE EVEN IF THE INSTANT WIN GAME SHOULD SO INDICATE, UNLESS AND UNTIL ENTRANT'S ELIGIBILITY AND THE POTENTIAL WINNING PLAY HAS BEEN VERIFIED AND ENTRANT HAS BEEN NOTIFIED THAT VERIFICATION IS COMPLETE. SPONSOR WILL NOT ACCEPT SCREEN SHOTS OR OTHER EVIDENCE OF WINNING IN LIEU OF ITS VALIDATION PROCESS. ANY PLAY THAT OCCURS AFTER THE SYSTEM HAS FAILED FOR ANY REASON IS DEEMED A DEFECTIVE PLAY AND IS VOID AND WILL NOT BE HONORED.

6. Verification of Winners: Potential winners of prizes valued at $600 or more will be sent via mail an affidavit of eligibility/liability/publicity release that must be signed and notarized by potential winner within ten (10) days of the date notice or attempted notice is received. Please allow 6-8 weeks from the end of the game to receive your prize.

7. Prizes.
ONE OF THE EIGHT (8) FOLLOWING PRIZES WILL BE RANDOMLY AWARDED EACH WEEK OF THE PROMOTION PERIOD (ARV: $5,000 EACH)
1) E! Juicy 3 Day/2 Night Trip for 2 to Los Angeles. Trip includes round-trip coach airfare (from airport nearest winners' residence), hotel accommodations, dinner at a Los Angeles restaurant, and round-trip airport/hotel transfers. Travel is subject to availability. Trip must be taken by December 31, 2004. Winner is responsible for all expenses not specified as part of the prize. 2) E! Juicy 3-Day/2-Night Trip for 2 to Las Vegas. Trip includes round-trip coach airfare (from airport nearest winners' residence), hotel accommodations, dinner at a Las Vegas restaurant, round-trip airport/hotel transfers, and $1,000 spending money. Travel is subject to availability. Trip must be taken by December 31, 2004. Winner is responsible for all expenses not specified as part of the prize. 3) 3-day 2-night VIP Trip for 2 to Premiere's Annual Women in Hollywood Luncheon. Trip includes round-trip coach airfare (from airport nearest winners' residence), hotel accommodations, and round-trip airport/hotel transfers. Travel is subject to availability. Trip must be taken by December 31, 2004. Winner is responsible for all expenses not specified as part of the prize. 4) Loew's VIP Movie Premiere 3-day 2-night Trip for 2 to New York City. Trip includes round-trip coach airfare (from airport nearest winners' residence), hotel accommodations, and round-trip airport/hotel transfers. Travel is subject to availability. Trip must be taken by December 31, 2004. Winner is responsible for all expenses not specified as part of the prize. 5) Theme Park 3-day, 2-night Vacation Trip for 4. Trip includes round-trip coach airfare (from airport nearest winners' residence), hotel accommodations, theme park merchandise and round-trip airport/hotel transfers. Travel is subject to availability. Trip must be taken by December 31, 2004. Winner is responsible for all expenses not specified as part of the prize. 6) Ultimate CD Package/Library including a Stereo System and 100 Music CDs. 7) GameWorks Ultimate Gamer 3-day, 2-night VIP Trip for 2 to Las Vegas. Trip includes round-trip coach airfare (from airport nearest winners' residence), hotel accommodations, lunch or dinner at GameWorks and unlimited video game play, and round-trip airport/hotel transfers. Travel is subject to availability. Trip must be taken by December 31, 2004. Winner is responsible for all expenses not specified as part of the prize. 8) eBay Entertainment Shopping Spree powered by PayPal. The eBay Shopping Spree can only be used to purchase listings on the eBay Site using PayPal. Use of the eBay Shopping Spree is subject to eBay's terms and conditions, which shall be provided when prize is awarded. The entire balance of the eBay Shopping Spree must be used in full by no later than one year of prize notification. All money not used by such date shall be forfeited.

No prize substitutions, cash equivalent, or transfer of prizes permitted except at the sole discretion of the Sponsor. Prize subject to availability and Sponsor reserves the right, at its sole discretion, to award a prize of greater or equal value if the advertised prize is unavailable. All other costs not specifically stated here in, including, but not limited to, taxes, meals, tips and gasoline for rental car (if applicable), are the responsibility of the winner. Taxes are the sole responsibility of the winners. Reservations for any trip must be made through Sponsor's agent, on a carrier of Sponsor's choice, at least 45 days prior to intended travel. Blackout periods and other restrictions, conditions, and limitations may apply. Complete terms and conditions of trip will be furnished with prize notification. Travel companion of Grand Prize trip winner must travel with winner on the same itinerary. In addition, travel companion of Prize trip winner must be 18 years of age or older, unless the winner is the parent/legal guardian of such minor travel companion. Winner and travel companion are responsible for all required travel documents. Winner and travel companion are responsible for obtaining travel insurance (and all other forms of insurance) where applicable, at their option, and hereby acknowledge that the Sponsor has not and will not obtain or provide travel insurance or any other form of insurance. Prize winner and travel companion, or the parent or legal guardian if companion is under 18 years of age, must sign a consent to Publicity, Liability Waiver and Travel Release form prior to traveling. If a selected event is unable to take place as scheduled, for reasons such as cancellation, preemption, postponement or unavailability, or for any reason beyond the control of the Sponsor, Sponsor's sole responsibility to a Prize winner will be to award the remaining available portion of the prize and no substitution will be provided for unawarded portion of prize. Any depiction of prize is for illustrative purposes only.

THESE MISCELLANEOUS PRIZES WILL BE RANDOMLY AWARDED DURING THE PROMOTIONAL PERIOD. SUCH PRIZES MAY INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING:
ONE THOUSAND (1000) E! logo wear merchandise (ARV: $15.00 each)
ONE THOUSAND (1000) Feature length DVDs (ARV: $20.00 each)
FIFTEEN HUNDRED (1500) Music CDs (ARV: $15.00 each)
ONE THOUSAND (1000) Movie Tickets for 2 (ARV: $24.00 each)
FIVE HUNDRED (500) PC Video Games (ARV: $50.00 each)

Total Retail Value of all prizes is $146,500.00. Prizes are non-transferable with **no cash redemption** or equivalent, except at the sole discretion of the Sponsor. Sponsor reserves the right to substitute a prize or prize component of equal or greater value should a prize or any component of a prize become unavailable. If instant win game prizes remain after the Promotion Period, they will not be awarded. Odds of winning an instant win prize are based on the number of eligible game plays during the Promotion Period. **Limit one (1) instant win prize per person per e-mail address.** Winners are responsible for payment of taxes on prizes and for any other expenses relating to the use of prizes. Winner is responsible for all federal, state, and local taxes, including without limitation any applicable income taxes. Sponsor to the extent required by law, reserves the right to notify local, state and federal taxing or regulatory authorities of the identity of the winner, the value of the prize, and any other information required by any applicable statute, regulation, or ordinance.

8. General Rules: Where permitted by law, winners grant (and agree to confirm that grant in writing) to Sponsor, and those acting pursuant to Sponsor's permission, the right at any time to print, publish, broadcast and use worldwide in any media now known or hereafter developed, including but not limited to the World Wide Web, winner's name, portrait, picture, voice, likeness and biographical information as news or information and for advertising, trade and promotional purposes without additional consideration and without review, notice or approval.

Sponsor, administrator, or partners reserve the right, at their sole discretion, to disqualify any individual found in their sole discretion, to be (a) tampering with the entry process or the operation of the Instant Win Game or the eBay Web site; (b) in violation of the Terms of Service of the eBay Web site; (c) acting in violation of the Official Rules; or (d) acting in a non-sportsmanlike or disruptive manner, or with intent to annoy, abuse, threaten or harass any other person. Any use of robotic, automatic, macro, programmed, third party, or like entry methods will void all such entries, and any participant using any such method will be disqualified. In the event of a dispute as to entries submitted by multiple users having the same e-mail account, the authorized subscriber of the e-mail account used to play the Game at the actual time of play will be deemed to be the participant and must comply with these rules. Authorized account subscriber is deemed to be the natural person who is assigned an e-mail address by an Internet access provider, online service provider or other organization which is responsible for assigning e-mail addresses or the domain associated with the submitted e-mail address. Sponsor may prosecute any fraudulent activities to the full extent of the law.

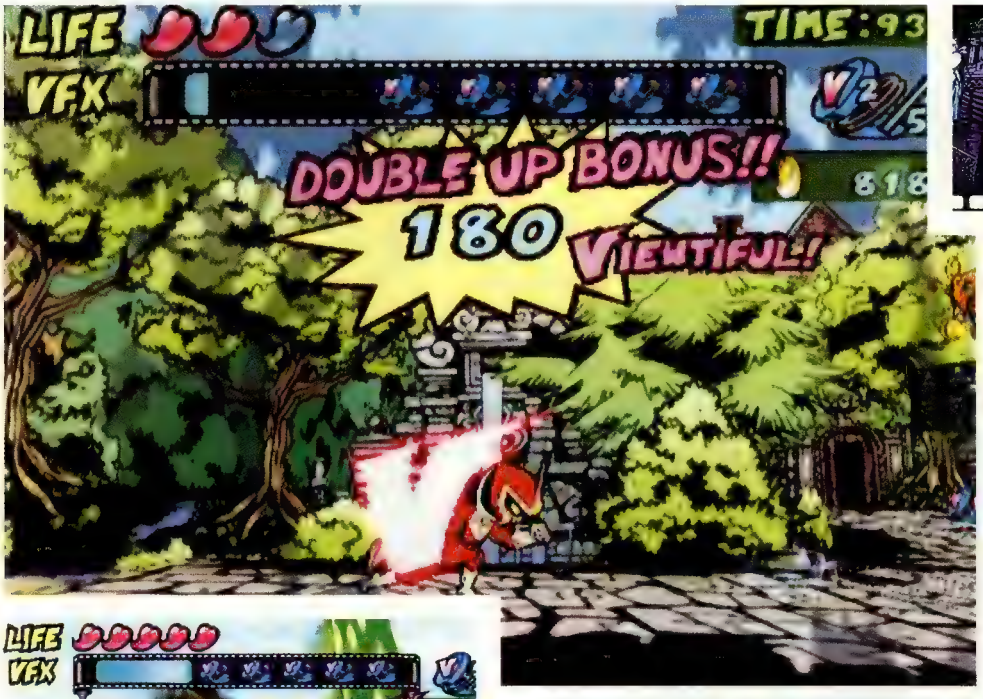
9. Data Collection: Sponsor will be collecting personal data about participants when they enter the Instant Win Game. Please review Sponsor's privacy policy at http://pages.ebay.com/help/policies/hub.html. By participating in the instant win game, entrants hereby agree to all personal information uses and disclaimers as explained in the above noted privacy policy.

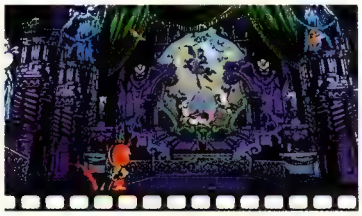
10. Limitation of Liability: By participating in the Instant Win Game, entrants agree to abide by the terms of these official rules and the decisions of the judges, waive any right to claim ambiguity in the rules, and release, indemnify, and hold harmless the sponsor, administrator, game and prize partners, and each of their parents, affiliates, subsidiaries, prize suppliers, advertising and promotion agencies, and all of their respective agents, representatives, officers, directors, shareholders, members and employees (collectively, "Releasees") from and against any injuries, losses, damages, claims, actions, or any liability of any kind resulting from or arising from participation in the instant win game or acceptance, possession, use, misuse, or nonuse of the prize that may be awarded (including any travel or activities related hereto). Winners agree to accept the prize "as is", and entrants hereby acknowledge that sponsor, administrator or partners has neither made nor is in any manner responsible or liable for any warranty, or guarantee, express or implied, in fact or in law, relative to the prize, including express warranties (if any) provided exclusively by a prize supplier that are sent along with the prize.

11. Additional Terms and Conditions: Entrants agree that any and all disputes shall be governed by the laws of the State of California. Releasees are not responsible for printing or typographical errors in any instant win game-related materials, or for transactions (including response submissions) that are lost, misdirected, fail to enter into the processing system, or are processed, reported, or transmitted late or incorrectly or are lost for any reason including computer, telephone, paper transfer, mail system, human or other error; or for electronic, computer, or telephonic malfunction or error, including inability to access any Web site associated with the instant win game, or process any transaction thereon. If in the Sponsor or administrator's opinion, there is any suspected or actual evidence of electronic or non-electronic tampering with any portion of the instant win game, or if computer virus, bugs, unauthorized intervention, fraud, or technical difficulties or failures compromise or corrupt or affect the administration, integrity, security, fairness, or proper conduct of the instant win game, the Sponsor, administrator and partners reserve the right at their sole discretion to disqualify any individual who tampers with the entry process and or void any entries submitted fraudulently, modify or suspend the instant win game, or to terminate the instant win game and award the remaining prizes using all eligible, non-suspect entries received as of the action requiring such termination. Sponsor reserves the right to modify or terminate the instant win game in its entirety at any time and at its sole discretion. Should the instant win game be terminated or modified prior to the stated end date, notice will be posted on http://www.ebay.com/imagine. Any attempt by an entrant or any other individual to deliberately damage any Web site or undermine the legitimate operation of the instant win game is a violation of criminal and civil laws and should such an attempt be made, the Sponsor, game administrator and partners reserve the right to seek damages and other remedies form any such person to the fullest extent permitted by law. Any attempts by an individual to access any Web site associated with the instant win game via a bot script or other brute force attack or any other unauthorized means will result in the IP address becoming ineligible. Use of automated entry devices, or instant win game entry services or programs is prohibited.

12. Winners List or Rules Requests: For the name of winners, send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to eBay Inc. "Imagine What You'll Find, Imagine What You'll Win." Instant Win Game (Please list either Winner's List or Rules Requests), Dept # 342004, Lubbock, TX, 79491-2004. Requests must be received by October 30, 2003. VT residents may exclude return postage. A list of weekly winners will also be posted each current week during the promotion at www.ebay.com/imagine.

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→ Kicking butts isn't the only thing you do in *Viewtiful Joe*. Some sections have you flying high in the skies, taking down aerial squadrons of planes, bats, and the like, requiring you to use your expanded palette of moves to survive.



GC

VIEWTIFUL JOE

RED HOT, MAN

TEEN | GC

PUBLISHER: CAPCOM
DEVELOPER: TEAM VIEWTIFUL
PRICE: $39.99
RELEASE: OCTOBER 2003
PLAYERS: 1
ORIGIN: JAPAN

Viewtiful Joe is every boy's Underoo-wrapped fantasy come true. Forget about tying one of mom's old sheets around your neck and calling it a cape; in _Viewtiful Joe_ you _are_ the superhero.

Much has been made of *Joe*'s striking neo-2D comic-art landscapes and old-school side-scrolling pyrotechnics, and now that the game is complete, we're happy to say that this is one of the most handsome, inventive, and to be perfectly frank, *cool* beat-em-ups ever conceived.

Beyond the endearing "Average Joe turns Power Ranger, rescues girlfriend" plot thread lies an action-packed game filled with comic-book supermoves and lightning quick controls. The way Capcom eases players into Joe's ever-expanding palette of moves (taught, primarily, through an in-game tutorial and expanded through subsequent power-up purchases) is both considerate and entertaining. While you start the game with a basic understanding of how to simply dodge your enemy's attacks (which enables you to effectively launch countermeasures), by the third stage you'll be slowing down time, utilizing a vast and powerful array of "Zoom In" moves, and performing acrobatic stunts that can only be described as "viewtiful."

Simply put, beating the crap out of the opposition never, ever gets old, whether you're tearing apart foot-soldiers or blowing bat-bosses out of the sky. And when you punch, jump, and kick as stylishly, energetically, and tirelessly as a souped-up Joe, who could possibly resist?

Helping matters are the devilishly scripted, expertly voiced cut-scenes that will have gamers laughing out loud. A winning combination of style and substance.

_James Mielke

GMR COOL. DUDE 9/10

BETTER THAN: COMIX ZONE (GENESIS)
NOT AS GOOD AS: GUARDIAN HEROES
WAIT FOR IT: SEVEN SAMURAI 20XX

2ND. OPINION

Viewtiful Joe has got everything I look for in a game: a distinct and expertly crafted style, intuitive and responsive control, an addictive difficulty level, and good old-fashioned fun. Bless your little hearts, Capcom

_Andrew Pfister

DYNASTY TACTICS 2

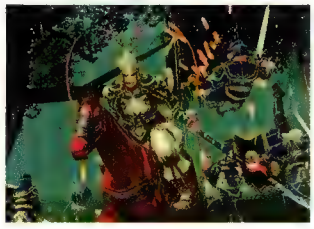
STRATEGY OF THE THREE KINGDOMS

TEEN | PS2

Aside from the addition of Lu Bu as a fourth general to command, the availability of a few new tactics (advanced attack methods such as Raid and Volley), and the ability to perform single-person combos, not much has changed in the second installment of *Dynasty Tactics*. Koei's turn-based tactical strategy series based on Three Kingdoms–era China is, quite disappointingly, a virtual rerelease of its predecessor.

Keeping that in mind, however, you'll see that *DT* is still one fine tactical strategy series. It takes the genre in directions it's never gone—for example, having to think things out three moves ahead to execute the most ideal punishing combo (a feature that really distinguishes a *DT* game from the *Final Fantasy Tactics* wannabes out there) is just plain addictive. Very slow-paced in nature, *DT2* is the type of game you plan to play for 30 minutes but wind up spending three hours with (granted, some of your time is spent trying to distinguish a Xun Yu from a Xun You). It's just too bad that so little has been changed. This isn't *Dynasty Tactics 2*, it's *DT: Special Edition*. Let's hope for some much-needed polish on an otherwise great game for *DT3*.

_Chris Baker



PUB KOEI — PRICE $49.99
DEV KOEI — PLAYERS 1-2
REL AVAILABLE NOW — ORIGIN JAPAN

GMR MOVE IT 7/10

BETTER THAN: ROMANCE OTTK VIII
NOT AS GOOD AS: FINAL FANTASY TACTICS
WAIT FOR IT: GLADIUS

ROMANCE OTTK VIII

DIE A LITTLE DEATH IN CHINA

TEEN | PS2

***Romance of the Three Kingdoms VIII* isn't as deep as it is bottomless. Given the chance, the turn-based strategy game will gleefully eat your life, suck your brain, and give you a Napoleon complex in the process. Set in ancient China (from 184 to 234 A.D.), this game lets you build an empire, one brick at a time. You play as a vassal, a lord, a prefect, or other characters, and manage all facets of war (and peace) to the point of exhaustion and beyond.**

These three kingdoms won't romance themselves. As a ruler, you dictate policy, hire and fire officers, select tactics to employ on other kingdoms, assign tasks for the minions to perform, and make military moves. As a vassal, you can suggest strategies and hope the boss agrees. Either way, the game throws up an endless procession of static talking heads. Got patience? You'd better.

Excessive maintenance chores and extended turn-based battles—which can last up to an hour even with most of the forces on computer controls—sap the game of its vitality. What's left is so detail oriented and text heavy that it appeals to only the most diehard and, perhaps, anal-retentive.

_Greg Orlando



PUB KOEI — PRICE $49.99
DEV KOEI — PLAYERS 1
REL AVAILABLE NOW — ORIGIN JAPAN

GMR GRUELING 6/10

BETTER THAN: THOUSAND LAND
WORSE THAN: ADVANCE WARS
WAIT FOR IT: FINAL FANTASY TACTICS ADVANCE



WARHAMMER 40,000: FIRE WARRIOR

IT'S HAMMER TIME

MATURE | PS2

The *Warhammer* universe has been popular with tabletop gamers and the die-cast figurine crowd (vastly powerful lobbies, mind you) for years, especially in Europe. So what does that have to do with first-person shooters on PS2 (and PC)? Not much really. It's hard to imagine that hardcore *Warhammer* fans will find *Fire Warrior* a sufficient depiction of the board-game's universe, nor will it satisfy their geeked-out needs, but for the rest of us, *Fire Warrior* is a decent action game that won't disappoint anyone but the most jaded videogame reviewer.

Fire Warrior's biggest charm is that it looks very nice—lots of colorful weapon effects, complex lighting, loads of particles, etc.—while running at a consistently high framerate. Numerous passersby at *GMR*'s secret underground playtesting labs saw *Fire Warrior* being played and asked with no small hint of incredulity: "This is on PS2?" It plays nicely and the control is very good, which is somewhat rare for console first-person shooters. All in all, it's a nice example of quality videogame programming.

But what holds *Fire Warrior* back is some rather uninspiring gameplay. You play the entire game as a single lowly Tau warrior and must fight your way through legions of increasingly difficult enemies. Pretty standard stuff. The weapons are of the standard machine gun and shotgun variety, and the levels don't amount to much more than "push the button" or "find the key to open the door." Boooo-ring!

Fire Warrior could have been a really inspiring game, and there's reason to believe that *Fire Warrior 2* might be, if this one does well. There's a lot to like about this efficient little game, but very little of it will stick with you past the weekend you spend beating it.

_Tom Price

PUB THQ — PRICE $49.99
DEV KUJU — PLAYERS 1-8 (ONLINE)
REL AVAILABLE NOW — ORIGIN U.S.A.

GMR CRUNCHY 6/10

BETTER THAN: RED FACTION
NOT AS GOOD AS: HALO
WAIT FOR IT: KILL ZONE



PS2

XTREME-G RACING ASSOCIATION

STUCK IN A RUT

TEEN | PS2 [REVIEWED] | XB | GC

You've seen it before, and you'll see it again. In the latest game in Acclaim's *Extreme G* series, you're the driver of a futuristic supercycle who must outrace and outgun the opposition. This aging line began by providing *Wipeout* clones for game-starved Nintendo 64 owners before going multiplatform (PS2, GC) with *Extreme-G 3*, a great-for-its-time racer rife with high speeds and a trick-or-treat bag full of eye candy. Two years later, *XGRA* has arrived on the scene without much to show for its absence. The changes don't amount to much; it looks a lot like the last game and sounds worse. Ouch.

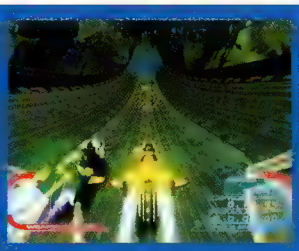
How is it different than before? At the start of each competition, you take on contracts that require you to complete such tasks as beating three racers, destroying a rival team's signs along the track, or assassinating another driver. Fulfill them, and your team awards you with upgrades. The downside is that these contracts often prevent you from coming in first place. (For instance, to take out another driver, you'll need to slow down to target him from behind...unless you want to drop a ton of mines, cross your fingers, and hope for the best.)

Gunning away at other racers is a sure way to earn their ire and discover their stereotypical personalities. (There's a cold-hearted Russian princess, a heavily accented Japanese kamikaze, and so on.) Each shouts corny canned phrases at you when under fire, but better yet, the aggrieved party will later come after you. The rivalry presents some nice thrills...it's just a shame you have to hear about it.

As mentioned before, *XGRA* lacks significantly improved visuals over *EG3*. In fact, while some of the high-speed special effects look better, the track designs are dull by comparison and the PS2 version's framerate bogs down at times. Likewise, the game's sappy techno soundtrack doesn't provide any reason to keep you from simply turning on your stereo. If *XGRA*'s base gameplay weren't so solid, you'd easily look elsewhere.

Besides sustaining the game's framerate better, the Xbox and GC versions support four-player multiplayer races over the PS2 game's wimpy two. Sadly, no edition offers online competition—the feature that would have distinguished *XGRA* from the competition. If this is the future, it's a shortsighted one at best.

_Joe Fielder







PUB ACCLAIM | PRICE $29.99
DEV ACCLAIM CHELTENHAM | PLAYERS 1-2 (PS2) 1-4(GC/XB)
REL SEPTEMBER 2003 | ORIGIN U.K.

GMR SCOOTER 6/10

BETTER THAN: TUBE SLIDER
NOT AS GOOD AS: WIPEOUT FUSION
WE'D RATHER PLAY: MOTOR RAID

XB

PS2

GC

BATMAN: RISE OF SIN TZU

NO WONDER

TEEN | PS2

***Batman: Rise of Sin Tzu* could have been a contender, except for an annoying gameplay mechanic that will irritate gamers almost instantly. Batman and his pals have their trademark weapons and moves, but almost all of them are locked. Basic moves, like throws, backfists, and two-player team-ups have to be earned. Players can unlock roughly one new move per character per level, but with four characters and over twenty moves each...sigh.**

As far as a beat-em-up goes, it's not half bad. Combos that start on one goon can be transferred midattack for targeting bonuses, and taunting enemies earns the player style points. And, frustratingly, crates, barrels, and the like can be picked up and thrown, but more often than not they'll explode in your character's face right along with the bad guy's. Once the solution to defeating end bosses like Clayface is figured out, they can be summarily beaten without Batman getting hit.

Once all the moves are unlocked, this is a rather decent game. But since they're not immediately available, the monotony will have you bailing before the second level. A shame for all the hardcore Batman fans out there who would have enjoyed this otherwise.

_Doug Trueman



PUB UBI SOFT | PRICE $39.95
DEV UBI SOFT | PLAYERS 1-4
REL OCTOBER 2003 | ORIGIN U.S.A.

GMR CAPED 6/10

BETTER THAN: SUPERMAN 64
NOT AS GOOD AS: SPIDER-MAN THE MOVIE
WAIT FOR IT: SPIDER-MAN 2

DUNGEONS & DRAGONS HEROES

YOU SHOULD GET OUT MORE

TEEN | XBOX

Before you consider playing *Heroes*, ask yourself, "Do I have any friends?" If the answer is no, we suggest you think twice about picking up Atari's new action-RPG, and not just 'cause you really need to get out more. Sure, playing solo gives you the time to explore *Heroes*' limited depth—carefully considering how to best outfit and build up your character, or which stats and cool abilities to boost. But in combat (the other 90 percent of the game), the slower pacing and repetitive gameplay wear thin after a few hours if you're all by your lonesome; mediocre graphics, switch-based "puzzles," and a shoestring story certainly don't help.

Which is where your friends come in. With two or three buddies, you'll be too busy slicing through endless hordes of bad guys, racing to nab treasures first, and just keeping track of your character amidst the full-on action orgy that is multiplayer to care about most of the game's flaws.

_Mark MacDonald





PUB ATARI | PRICE $49.99
DEV ATARI HUNT VALLEY | PLAYERS 1-4
REL SEPTEMBER 2003 | ORIGIN U.S.A.

GMR GROUP EFFORT 6/10

BETTER THAN: GAUNTLET LEGENDS
NOT AS GOOD AS: BALDUR'S GATE: DARK ALLIANCE
WAIT FOR IT: BG: DARK ALLIANCE II

AMD



AMD 64 Athlon FX

Introducing the AMD Athlon™ 64 FX processor. Simply the most amazing gaming engine there is. See the bloodshot eyes of your quivering enemy. Get all the burning rubber, flying sparks, and white knuckles you can take. Ramp up from 32- to 64-bit and you get the power to wreak serious havoc. Long may you reign. Get the AMD Athlon 64 FX edge at www.amd.com/athlon64fx

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LIONHEART: LOTC
KITTENS WITH NO CLAWS

TEEN | PC

The worst games are the ones that start out pretty good, only to revert to a pile of stink later. All of the awesome dialogue and flavor that *Lionheart: Legacy of the Crusader* starts with is swept aside once past the initial city.

Using the SPECIAL system from *Fallout*, *Lionheart* was supposed to be an awesome alternative history/fantasy RPG in which you can talk, kill, or steal your way to victory. Combine the character-development system and gameplay with the cool, alternative history/fantasy setting, and you basically have *Fallout Fantasy*. Or so you'd think. The first town, Barcelona, is filled with cool dialogue and neat uses of historical characters in quests, such as helping Guy Fawkes sabotage the Spanish Armada, settling Shakespeare's debt with Shylock, and helping Miguel Cervantes vanquish a dragon near a windmill. As in *Fallout*, these quests are filled with multiple solutions that let you jabber, jab, or jilt people.

But then you start to notice the issues with combat—like the fact that it's real-time/clicky like *Diablo*, but not as fun, that it's hard to target the baddies to click on them, and that there are hardly any health power-ups. So after clicking your way past some goblins, you'll probably spend a fair bit of time waiting to heal. Magic spells look damn dinky, and you can only tell them to follow you or stop—but that's it. You can't even annotate the map. So the pretty cool quests and diplomacy are sacked by sad combat that makes you frustrated and impatient.

Then it gets worse, because once you're past Barcelona, the game stops being an interesting RPG and quickly turns into a generic dungeon crawler—but with bad combat. For all of the hints of England and whatnot, you just end up in more caves, forests, and crypts. All of the interesting dialogue play is pretty much replaced by more limp-wristed clicking.

And finally, here's the biggest boneheaded interface move since mapping "A" to "attack" for the chat-heavy *EverQuest*—*Lionheart* bounds spellcasting to your right mouse button, but the antimagic Inquisition controls Barcelona, so any accidental clicks result in guards beating you down. Pretend they're beating you down for buying the game.

_Thierry Nguyen

PUB	BLACK ISLE	PRICE	$39.99
DEV	REFLEXIVE	PLAYERS	1-4
REL	AVAILABLE NOW	ORIGIN	U.S.A.

GMR BAD KITTY 4/10

BETTER THAN: GROM
BUT NOT AS GOOD AS: FALLOUT
WAIT FOR IT: TEMPLE OF ELEMENTAL EVIL

REPUBLIC: THE REVOLUTION
MORE FUN IN THE VIRTUAL WORLD

TEEN | PC

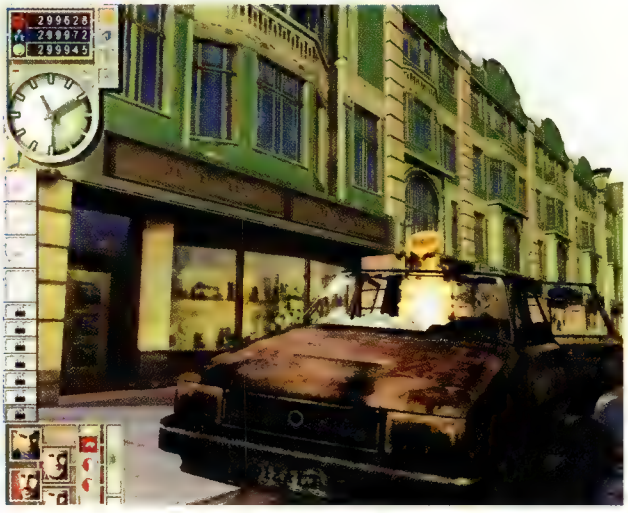
Congratulations, all current and former poli-sci majors. Finally, a game that should appeal to you and you alone has arrived to sate your cravings for the finer points of political theory played out in glorious but completely unnecessary 3D (requiring 512 MB of RAM to even run). But even better, the other 99.99 percent of us should be completely befuddled by this incomprehensible "game" of a day-planner simulator.

Day planner you say? Yes, a day planner is essentially the main gameplay engine under the hood, and your main gameplay action is giving your operatives orders and watching them roam around this dictator-led breakaway Soviet republic. Of course, these errands help build the foundation of the revolution you ultimately want to launch, but really. With all these amazing graphics, wouldn't you like to at least shoot something?

But *Republic* is so much more than just superfluous graphics and hands-off gameplay. It's also confusing as hell. Wait, what the hell is the difference between that graph and that pie chart? They both relate pieces of disconnected info about your invisible influence over different parts of the city. The game's pretty much an open sandbox for you to play a Lech Walesa–wannabe, although there is a mission structure you'll need to follow just a bit to increase your power and followers. There's a confusing conversation game that seems to end before you even begin and a really terrible tutorial and help system. This is one of those sit-down-and-read-the-manual-before-you-ever-play-it games. No thanks.

It's not that Elixir didn't succeed in what it set out to do. *Republic* is a very intelligent and complex program and the kind of game that bearded guys who've subscribed to *Computer Gaming World* since it was a pamphlet are probably going to love. Anyone else who wasn't around for the Korean War will probably just want to pass this one over.

_Tom Price



PUB	EIDOS	PRICE	$44.99
DEV	ELIXIR	PLAYERS	1
REL	AVAILABLE NOW	ORIGIN	U.K.

GMR FILOFAX 5/10

BETTER THAN: MASTER OF ORION 3
NOT AS GOOD AS: MICROSOFT OUTLOOK
WAIT FOR IT: THE CALIFORNIA RECALL



ROADKILL

GUILTY PLEASURE

MATURE | XBOX [REVIEWED] | PS2 | GC

Call it grand theft design, but Midway's auto combat game steals from Rockstar for good reason: *RoadKill* adds suspiciously familiar single-player gangster missions to the multiplayer arenas people loved in *Twisted Metal Black*. And it works. Three sprawling cities serve as backdrops for gun battles, and though you can't walk around, gun-turret and sniper missions break up the driving. But between its immature "Mature-rated" content (naughty language is prevalent) and rough gameplay, *RoadKill* narrowly misses excellence. *Twisted Metal* fans may enjoy the new weapons and radio stations, assuming they haven't outgrown the juvenile roughneck humor.

_Jeremy Horwitz

PUB MIDWAY
DEV TERMINAL REALITY
REL OCTOBER
PRICE $49.99
PLAYERS 1-4
ORIGIN U.S.A.

GMR SKANKY 7/10

BETTER THAN: TWISTED METAL 3
NOT AS GOOD AS: TWISTED METAL BLACK
WAIT FOR IT: GTA4





LETHAL SKIES II

WE HAVE, UH, LIFTOFF

TEEN | PS2

What a misnomer. Lethal? More accurately, these skies are generic. Sammy Studios, however, wisely figured gamers would rather fly skies of the lethal variety, than those of the generic.

As a fighter pilot in a nebulously defined war between two obliquely fleshed-out sides, players get to fly the unfriendly skies, blasting merry hell out of both real and fantastical planes, sea-based craft, and land targets. The game offers arcade-style flying with 100 percent less of those pesky real-world physics that would create uncontrollable spins and stalls, 19 planes to pilot, and 20 missions.

Skies performs competently throughout but never soars—save for an inspired replay mode that lets would-be Mavericks and Chuck Yeagers relive their greatest battles and most nontriumphant crashes from various perspectives. Its war-in-the-future story is so bland, it could be served as pabulum to small children. Its missions have players, among other things, flying through a series of bland, S-shaped ravines in a sort of homage to (or perhaps parody of) the Clint Eastwood film *Firefox*.

There's some fun to be had twisting and turning a plane through flak-filled battlefields, and players will certainly welcome the game's wingman control system and friendly pilot A.I. In *Lethal Skies II*, allied pilots actually aid the player, striking and destroying some, but not all, of the targets you assign them. Yet the fun only comes in small doses, and there's nothing here to truly immerse the player. The game is good, to be sure, but only good enough to be mundane.

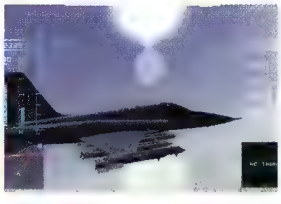
_ Greg Orlando

PUB SAMMY STUDIOS
DEV ASMIK STUDIOS
REL AVAILABLE NOW
PRICE $39.99
PLAYERS 1-2
ORIGIN JAPAN

GMR DRAFTY 6/10

BETTER THAN: MURAKUMO: RMP
WORSE THAN: ROBOTECH: BATTLECRY
WAIT FOR IT: CRIMSON SKIES: HRR







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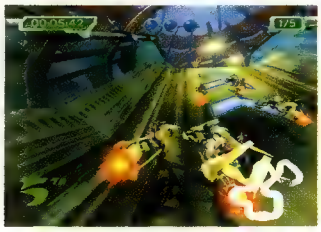




→ As fabulous as *Jak II* is, it's not without flaws. So much time is spent in vehicles that you wish they could powerslide, Jak dies a touch too easily, and the soundtrack is repetitive. But fans of *Mario* and *GTA* will love it.







→ The data in *Jak II* streams continuously off the disc, making for a single massive world instead of one that is broken into levels. This keeps the game experience cohesive, as no time is spent switching to gratuitous FMVs.

PS2

JAK II

JAK US IN

TEEN | PS2

PUBLISHER	SCEA
DEVELOPER	NAUGHTY DOG
PRICE	$39.99
RELEASE	AVAILABLE NOW
PLAYERS	1
ORIGIN	U.S.A.

Jak II starts off where the previous _Jak_ ends, though it's not necessary to have played the original to enjoy the sequel. Jak still runs and jumps with the elasticity of a rubber band, and Daxter still comes along for the ride and provides comic relief. But the days of the silent protagonist are over. The opening scene shows Jak being tortured over a period of two years by Baron Praxis, but then escaping. Jak joins the underground rebellion and is quickly put to work as its whipping boy, all the while vowing to kill the Baron. Darker tone than the first? Just a little.

The sequel plays like *Super Mario Sunshine* crossed with *Grand Theft Auto*. It has the intricate platform puzzles of the former but the massive city, heavy weaponry, and carjacking of the latter. Jak retains his move list from the first game, but he now has a dark half that turns him into a killing machine.

Jak's missions for the underground run the gamut: There are the straightforward platform levels of old, where he collects items and throws switches, but there are also racetracks, a skate park (where he can flip and grind on a hoverboard like Tony Hawk), sentry guns that need manning, and slaves to free. There's also a pier to surf around, firing ranges to practice on, cloaked enemies to stalk in a forest straight out of *Predator*, civilians to escort, and one assignment that has Jak leaving literally hundreds of bodies in his wake as he runs for freedom. No two missions are the same, and Jak is as comfortable with a chain gun as he is double-jumping over chasms that would give Lara Croft vertigo.

Still derivative, and slightly bizarre, but better than the previous game, *Jak II* is a trip worth taking.

_Doug Trueman

GMR TOUGH GUY **8**/10

BETTER THAN: JAK AND DAXTER: TPL
NOT AS GOOD AS: RATCHET AND CLANK
WAIT FOR IT: RATCHET & CLANK: GOING COMMANDO

2ND. OPINION

As much as an improvement over the first game as this is, the change in tone is so pronounced that it feels completely forced. Naughty Dog has some of the most talented programmers in the industry. I'd love to see what they could do if struck by true inspiration.

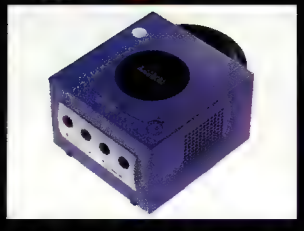
_James Mielke

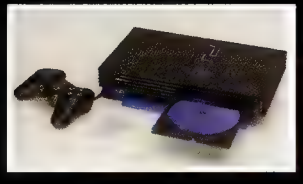
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Mystery Word Grid

	H					
		E				
P	I	N	C	H	W	MYSTERY WORD
	R					
S						

WORD LIST and LETTER CODE chart

PINCH ....W	PRESS ....K	BLAST ....A	WRECK ....D
BREAK ....Z	PUNCH ....S	SPRAY C	TURBO V
STOMP ....T	STAND ....R	PRESS ....E	DREAM ....O
CRUSH I	SCORE ....H	SLANT L	CHASE ....P

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Verifiable retail value of the prize packages as follows: Media Rig Contest package $7,012.00 core components shown, bonus options $3,449.00, cash options $1,250.00. Computer Contest package $2,500.00 for computer, bonus options $2,337.00, cash options $1,250.00. Video Game Contest $700.00 for systems shown, $3,549.00 bonus options, $1,250.00 cash options.

TIME CRISIS 3
SHOOT FIRST. ASK QUESTIONS LATER

TEEN | PS2

The light-gun shooting genre faces the same uncertain future as the traditional side- or vertically scrolling 2D shooter. Basically, there is a diminishing market for a genre born in the arcade—one designed to provide the kind of quick thrills that are traditionally dialed in for 15-minute bursts at best.

Thankfully, Namco isn't listening to such whispers, as *Time Crisis 3* is one of the best light-gun shooters to emerge in recent years. Utilizing the hyperaccurate GunCon (still a hassle for people who've moved on to S-Video or component video connections) or the perfectly functional Dual Shock configuration, *Time Crisis 3* provides three levels of graphically vibrant, bullet-dodging, time-conserving, live-ammo action to blast through, either by yourself (with a CPU-controlled partner) or with a friend via iLink for a truly arcadelike experience. Adding longevity are a handful of unlockable modes earned through repeated plays and successful completion of the game. The most welcome addition to the series are the highly interactive backgrounds of Namco's arcade classic *Crisis Zone*. They don't compensate for the game's relatively brief length (extra modes or not), but for those interested in this sort of thing, what's offered is top-notch.

_James Mielke



PUB NAMCO | PRICE $49.95
DEV NAMCO | PLAYERS 1-2
REL JUNE 2003 | ORIGIN U.S.A.

GMR RELOADED 7/10

BETTER THAN: HOUSE OF THE DEAD 2 (DC)
NOT AS GOOD AS: CRISIS ZONE (ARC)
WAIT FOR IT: VIRTUA COP 3 (ARC)

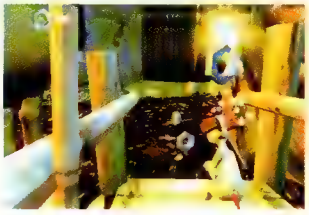
WALLACE & GROMIT: PROJECT ZOO
FEET OF CLAY

EVERYONE | PS2 [REVIEWED] | GC | XB

Gromit the dog is the hero of *Project Zoo*, but Wallace the inventor is the inspiration behind its style. If this were first and foremost an action game, it would fail, but instead it shares Wallace's obsession with gadgets, puzzles, and Rube Goldbergian machinery. In the cartoons, the dog is always saving the inventor from himself, but here the tables are turned.

This is a slow-paced, puzzle-driven platformer, light on action and twitchy challenge. It's a little like *Ico* instead, with the same blend of environmental interaction and cooperative gameplay. That's how it should be, because when the action speeds up—in some painfully confusing boss battles—the imprecise controls and weak camera direction nearly kill it. But at its best, *Wallace & Gromit: Project Zoo* offers challenging puzzles, a wide array of complex environments, and a welcome touch of the film series' dry wit.

_Dave Smith





PUB BAM! ENTERTAINMENT | PRICE $39.99
DEV FRONTIER DEVELOPMENTS | PLAYERS 1
REL AVAILABLE NOW | ORIGIN U.K.

GMR SQUOOSHY 7/10

BETTER THAN: POWERPUFF GIRLS: RELISH RAMPAGE
NOT AS GOOD AS: ICO
WAIT FOR IT: RATCHET & CLANK 2

MEGA MAN X7
THE MORE THE MERRIER

TEEN | PS2

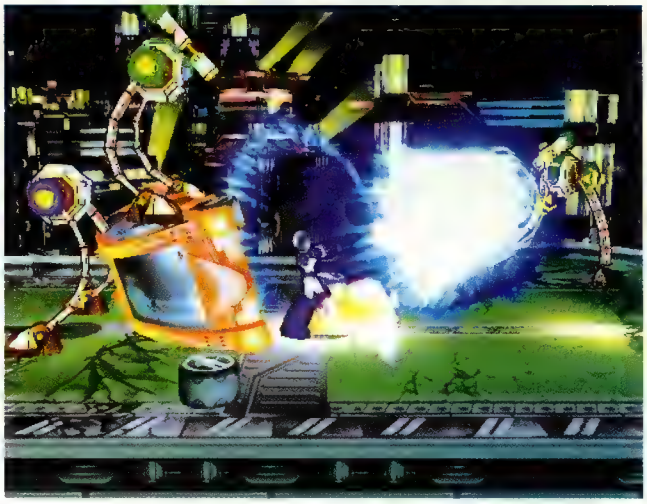
Not even that fat plumber Mario has forged a career out of running and jumping as handily as Capcom's blue bomber has. Despite his various excursions into 3D adventuring, kart racing, fighting, and even soccer playing, Mega Man's bread and butter has always been the run-n-gun, and *X7* continues that tradition admirably.

Utilizing the cel-shaded style previously explored in the strictly side-scrolling *Mega Man Network Transmission* for GameCube, Mega Man (in this instance of the X variety) finally has a *Klonoa*-esque 3D action-platformer worth stamping his name on and, happily, it's turned out fine.

Mega Man X7 offers gamers the traditional selection of eight differently themed levels, each with its own distinct boss encounters (the bosses, of course, are outrageously named, like "Tornado Tonion"). The difference now is that *X7* whips in some variety by offering three characters to play as (the three being X, Zero, and newcomer Axl), each offers a unique set of abilities and moves. The problem with each of these moves is that they're somewhat unbalanced. You'd only want to switch to Zero, for example, in spots because he has a handy double-jump and convenient wall-climbing abilities. Otherwise, you'd want to save your upgrades for Axl, whose long-range attacks and relatively powerful shots make him the protagonist of choice. Besides, you don't even get X until halfway through the game.

Visually, the cel-shaded visuals, while not quite *Viewtiful Joe*, suit the nature of the game itself, and rarely has any of Mega Man's crew looked better. *X7* occasionally takes a turn into *Mega Man Legends* territory with some open-ended 3D areas where the camera doesn't quite keep up with the action, leading to the game's cheapest moments and some untimely deaths. Overall, though, the action is fast and fun, and the option to switch the dialogue to Japanese (read: the English acting is mediocre) saves the day.

_James Mielke



PUB CAPCOM | PRICE $39.99
DEV CAPCOM | PLAYERS 1
REL OCTOBER 2003 | ORIGIN JAPAN

GMR THE SWITCH 7/10

BETTER THAN: MEGA MAN NETWORK TRANSMISSION
NOT AS GOOD AS: VIEWTIFUL JOE
WAIT FOR IT: CASTLEVANIA: LAMENT OF INNOCENCE



KONAMI

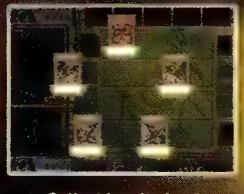
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HARDWARE

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EYE TOY

ONE STEP SHY OF THE MIND POLICE

EVERYONE | PS2

The right idea at precisely the right time, Sony's Eye Toy satisfies the voyeuristic/narcissistic nature in all of us by combining the base functionalities of a webcam with the social shenanigans of a party game. Also, there are special effects.

An innovation in how one can control and interact with a videogame, Eye Toy places the gamer on TV in the context of one of the many available minigames. The participant then selects a game to play, either by using the old-fashioned Dual Shock controller or by slapping onscreen "buttons" with your onscreen hands. Unlike regular digital cameras or webcams, the Eye Toy performs the neat trick of reversing your image, meaning that when you move your right arm to interact with something onscreen, the "correct" appendage responds, keeping things simple and intuitive to follow.

Most of Eye Toy's games and activities involve the simple act of tapping things that pop up on the TV screen. For example, the minigame Slap Stream finds you trying to save a sexy little vixen in a bunny suit from the horrible rodentia that harass her. As the miscreants pop up, you attempt to slap them away, while trying to avoid slapping the bunny chick whenever she surfaces. It's not much more than a high-tech game of Whack-a-Mole, but it's entertaining nevertheless.

The Eye Toy experience suffers from the overall lack of precision one would expect from a game that involves little more than waving your hands in vague motions at your TV, but it's still a bold experiment.

The most enjoyable activities come from the Playroom games, where you may simply opt to pop bubbles, pester fish, or watch yourself through a number of graphical filters. Eye Toy even features a limited video-chat function. Overall, the unit is a great way to get the whole family in front of the TV screen, and the potential for future gaming applications is certainly rife with possibilities. But the main thing Eye Toy lacks is a killer app to elevate it beyond a mere party game/tech demo with which to impress your friends.

_James Mielke

PUB: SCEA — PRICE: $49.99
DEV: LONDON STUDIO — PLAYERS: 1-4
RELEASE: NOVEMBER 2003 — ORIGIN: U.K.

GMR CYBER 7/10

BETTER THAN: SAMBA DE AMIGO
NOT AS GOOD AS: GAME & WATCH GALLERY 4 (GBA)
ALSO CHECK: WWW.WEBCAM.COM

WHAT'S ON TV?

EyeToy is cute and all that, but without some games to play, it's really little more than a tiny black webcam with an attitude. Let's take a look at some of the semi-strenuous activities you can do while also looking ridiculous.

No. 05 KEEP UPS

You're nine years old all over again as it's up to you to keep this soccer ball afloat, using your face, hands or whatever you wish to juggle that sucker for nearly three minutes. Much hilarity ensues. Ha ha!



No. 04 KUNG FOO

Be Bruce Lee for just one moment by slapping anything that comes onscreen. But try not to look like a kung fool when the board-breaking bonus rounds come up. No one likes a wimpy kung fu fighter.



No. 03 MIRROR TIME

This is the drunken equivalent of Whack-a-Mole, as you try to tap the very Link-like (as in Nintendo's Link) young lady, while the devilish red bad guy flips the perspective every which way but loose. Tough.



No. 02 BOXING CHUMP

Can you go from chump to champ as you attempt to knock out the robot boxer? This aerobic selection gives your arms a workout as you flail at the air in real life, and at the robot in the world of television.

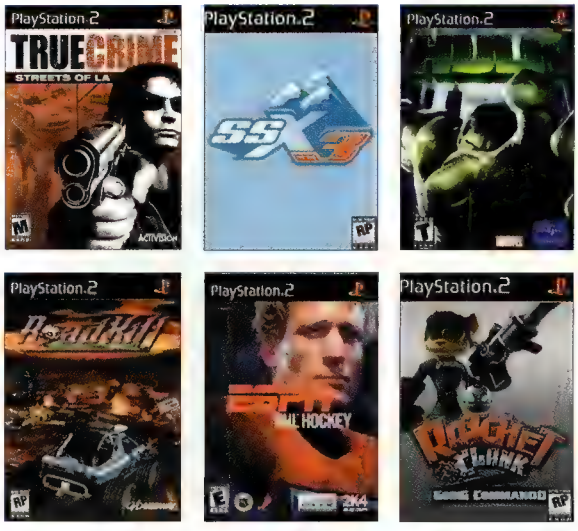


No. 01 BUBBLES

Our favorite distraction in the Playroom, the Bubbles option simply creates a never-ending stream of bubbles for the player to pop (or not) at his leisure. Impressively, each bubble features the player's face.



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BATTLEFIELD 1942: SECRET WEAPONS WWII
TOTAL WARGASM

MATURE | PC

It's no secret—*Battlefield 1942* is a great game. Rather than just mailing in eight levels and calling it a day, this expansion tacks on much more. The new Objective mode adds a whole lot of challenge in multiplayer. Then there's the matter of all the experimental vehicles. They're well balanced and well placed, so you'll have a tough time deciding whether you want to use a C-47 transport plane or the V-2 Wasserfall guided missile as a mobile spawn point. It also looks pretty good, considering the advanced age of the *Battlefield* engine. Our advice: It's never too late to enlist.

_Darren Gladstone



PUB EA | PRICE $29.99
DEV DIGITAL ILLUSIONS CE | PLAYERS 1-64
REL AVAILABLE NOW | ORIGIN U.S.A.

GMR SECRET SAUCE 8/10

BETTER THAN: BF 1942: THE ROAD TO ROME
NOT AS GOOD AS: LIVE AMMO
WAIT FOR IT: JOINT OPERATIONS

DDRMAX2
CAN'T GET YOU OUT OF MY HEAD

EVERYONE | PS2

Just like the *Madden* football series, a new *Dance Dance Revolution* is now an annual occurrence. The structure and strategy are the same, except you have new songs instead of updated rosters, a new Nonstop mode instead of Playmaker control, and a new Devil-Zukin model on the cover instead of Michael Vick. And like the annual football fix, it's a killer deal for the money, whether you're a casual fan or a liquid-limbed obsessive.

While it isn't the revolution *DDRMAX* was, *DDRMAX2* doesn't need to be. It serves up an equally fat collection of 60-plus songs, and its game modes have been tweaked to appeal to a wide range of skill levels. Nonstop mode has more initially unlocked tracks, for example, so beginners have more to pick from than in the brutally difficult Oni mode. The system for unlocking secrets is also more transparent, using a simple point system to gradually reveal new tunes and features.

Konami USA has mixed a completely new song list for the Stateside release, just like the original *DDRMAX*, so there's something new even if you bought the Japanese import. The Crystal Method, Kylie Minogue, and Dirty Vegas add some name value and thoroughly danceable tracks (plus big ups to Konami for adding more KC and the Sunshine Band), while the selection of arcade-born *DDR* tracks smartly favors a faster, upbeat style. If *DDR* keeps spreading like the arcade virus it is, Konami could keep going in this groove for years.

_ Dave Smith





PUB KONAMI OF AMERICA | PRICE $39.99
DEV KONAMI TOKYO | PLAYERS 1-2
REL AVAILABLE NOW | ORIGIN JAPAN

GMR JUMP AROUND 8/10

BETTER THAN: DDRMAX
NOT AS GOOD AS: A CLUB FULL OF HOTTIES
ALSO TRY: GOING OUT ON SATURDAY NIGHTS

STARSKY & HUTCH
YOU'RE OFF THE FORCE

TEEN | XBOX (REVIEWED) | PC | PS2

We're still trying to figure out whom exactly this game was made for. Most likely, it wasn't for fans of next year's *Starsky & Hutch* movie, because 1) they don't exist, and 2) the game is based on the old TV show. It wasn't for old *Starsky & Hutch* aficionados, because there's, like, eight of them. And it certainly wasn't for people who enjoy playing solid driving games, because this definitely isn't one of 'em.

The game is broken up into three seasons, each with six missions, for a total of 18 levels. That's 18 levels of chasing down a bad guy, whittling away at his health bar for a good five minutes with a pistol, maybe jumping over a crate or two, and avoiding the dumbass uniform cops who actively try to knock you off the chase. One of the advertised features of *Starsky & Hutch* is the ability to team up with a friend and roleplay as the dynamic duo—one gets to drive, the other gets to shoot. Unfortunately, since driving and shooting by yourself is already a tedious procedure, all you're doing is dividing any potential fun in half.

It's one of those games that nobody really asked for, so that leaves only one group of people who will be buying *Starsky & Hutch*: suckers.

_ Andrew Pfister







PUB GOTHAM/EMPIRE | PRICE $19.99
DEV MINDS EYE | PLAYERS 1-2
REL AVAILABLE NOW | ORIGIN U.K.

GMR STARCHY 3/10

NOT AS GOOD AS: DRIVER
WE'D RATHER WATCH: RERUNS
WAIT FOR IT: THE STARSKY & HUTCH MOVIE. OR NOT

NASCAR THUNDER 2004
ROUND AND ROUND

EVERYONE | XBOX | PS2 | PC | GC

Like it or not, NASCAR is as American as chop suey and french fries. And without referring to its fans with such ugly epithets as "hillbilly" or "redneck" or "Floridian," there's something to be said about this being a sport for regular folks. But *NASCAR Thunder 2004* will please the fans who are into stuff like simulated physics and realistic sound as well as your cousin Billy, who wore a trucker hat way before it was cool. Way. It's fun and impressive, but neither the drama nor the realism will convert anyone who isn't already planning on naming their first-born "Dale."

_Tom Price



PUB EMPIRE | PRICE $49.99
DEV EA TIBURON | PLAYERS 1
REL AVAILABLE NOW | ORIGIN U.S.A.

GMR CIRCULAR 8/10

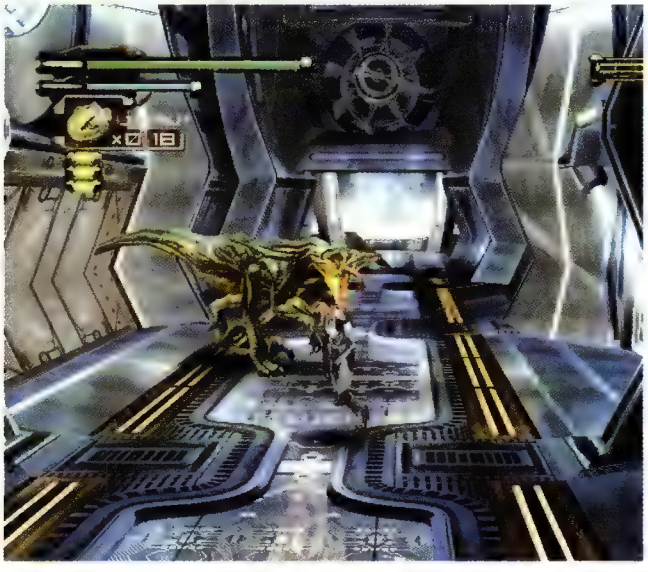
BETTER THAN: NASCAR THUNDER 2003
NOT AS GOOD AS: NASCAR RACING (PC)
WAIT FOR IT: PROJECT GOTHAM RACING 2

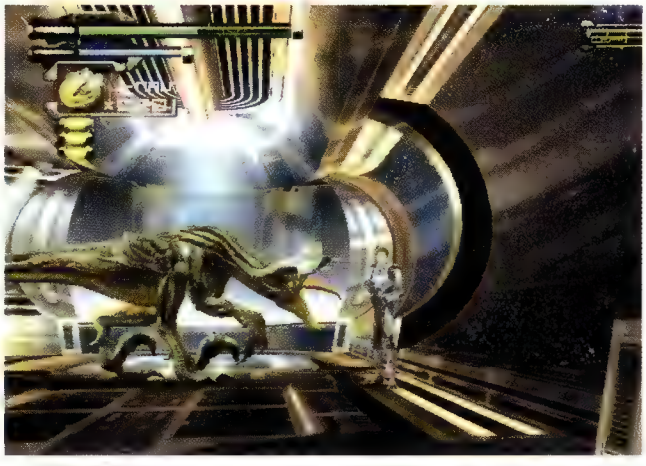




→ The abandoned *Ozymandias* has activated its automated defense systems, so danger lurks around every corner. Each room you unearth is infused with an impending sense of dread.







DINO CRISIS 3

MEDIOCRESAURUS REX

MATURE | XB

PUBLISHER CAPCOM
DEVELOPER CAPCOM
PRICE $49.99
RELEASE AVAILABLE NOW
PLAYERS 1
ORIGIN JAPAN

For every brilliant, innovative Capcom title like *Viewtiful Joe*, we get a *Dino Crisis 3*, a promising action-adventure that never really delivers on its incredible potential.

The third entry in the esoteric dinosaur-hunting franchise, *DC3* takes place in the isolation of the ghost ship *Ozymandias*, an intergalactic *Titanic*, minus Billy Zane and Leonardo DiCaprio. Also, a T-Rex appears. As ridiculous as this premise may seem, *DC3*'s impressive visuals and exotic interiors lend themselves to a convincingly creepy ambience.

Like other games in the survival-horror genre, the stakes are often high; given the voraciousness of these not-so-cute dinos and your limited first-aid kits, kicking the bucket just before that next save point could mean replaying entire sections all over again.

Which brings us to *DC3*'s biggest flaw—the game's busted camera system makes combat against these tenacious beasties artificially harder than it should be. While the controls respond admirably to your inputs, you can never see where, or what, you're fighting, since the camera has a tendency to focus on you rather than your targets. Oftentimes, spotting dinosaurs also equates to running into their salivating jaws. To make matters worse, much of the game's puzzles are platform based, which means you'll have to make precision jumps, all of which are hampered by videogaming's equivalent of a drunken, clueless cinematographer.

With so much to see and kill in the game, it's heartbreaking that the camera is so totally useless. If you're dying for a decent action-adventure this holiday season, don't be fooled by *DC3*'s glossy sheen.

_Che Chou

GMR TOOTHLESS 5/10

BETTER THAN: BLUE STINGER
NOT AS GOOD AS: DINO CRISIS 2
WAIT FOR IT: FATAL FRAME 2: CRIMSON BUTTERFLY

2ND. OPINION

Millions of years in the making (or so it seems), a third *Dino Crisis* is finally here. Sadly, what could have been another (much-needed) AAA title for the Xbox blows it where it counts, the camera. It's a good thing it's set in space; The once mighty Lizard King has overstayed its welcome here on Earth.

_David Chen



GBA REVIEW

SLAPPING BALLS IS FUN—ARGUABLY MORE FUN THAN ROLEPLAYING ON A SMALL SCREEN. YOU BE THE JUDGE

POKEMON PINBALL RUBY & SAPPHIRE

PULL UP TO THE BUMPER, BABY

EVERYONE | GBA

Whenever the flash and bang of today's blockbuster *Titanic*-sized 3D adventures/fighting games/racing games/first-person shooters and action games fades into the woodwork, leaving nothing behind but a faint residue until the next Big Franchise comes along, it's comforting to know that a simple game of pinball never fails to deliver. When you marry the spot-on physics of pinball ballistics with the collection-mania of Nintendo's ageless *Pokémon* franchise, good times are all but guaranteed.

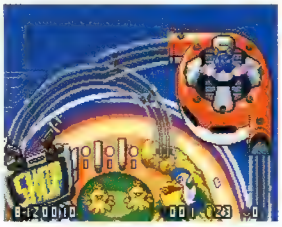
In the case of this "next-gen" *Pokémon Pinball* update (the first iteration, on GBC, is a classic), good times are to be had, but only to a limit. Although *PPR&S* features only two boards, other "levels" can be accessed by achieving a specific criteria. This helps keep the variety up, while eager gamers, both young and old, attempt to collect as many Pokémon as possible. Each board boasts a number of methods in which to awaken/hatch and catch the possible 200 Pokémon hidden in the game, but the relatively close-up nature of each stage's bumpers and prongs shows that *PPR&S*'s developers cared more about creating a creature-collecting game than an actual pinball experience. While the physics are accurate (if floaty), since each board is so compact, the game feels more like handball than pinball.

_James Mielke

PUB	NINTENDO	PRICE	$29.99
DEV	NINTENDO	PLAYERS	1-2 (W/Link cable)
REL	AVAILABLE NOW	ORIGIN	JAPAN

GMR UNDERACHIEVER 7/10

BETTER THAN: PINBALL OF THE DEAD
NOT AS GOOD AS: SONIC PINBALL PARTY
BEST FEATURE: DOESN'T REQUIRE QUARTERS







CIMA: THE ENEMY

LEAD US NOT UNTO FRUSTRATION

EVERYONE | GBA

Although the *Lufia* franchise was ignominiously taken from its founders, developer Neverland is back in business with *CIMA: The Enemy*. This action-RPG is a change of pace from the company's traditional turn-based games, but aside from a few quirks and flaws, *CIMA* upholds Neverland's reputation for quality.

One of the best things about the game is its specific, tight scope: As the game opens, you're introduced to 14 settlers riding a train en route to a new life on the frontier. Disaster inevitably strikes, the settlers are scattered across an extradimensional wasteland, and your task as a gate guardian is to rescue and herd the settlers to safety, one by one.

Each settler is useful to you in some way, whether in battle or exploration. The interface for controlling them is remarkably intuitive for a system with only four face keys; it's after you've given orders that trouble arises. Simply put, your settlers have possibly the worst pathfinding routines since *Secret of Mana*. The forced NPC babysitting from one location to another rarely leaves you free to concentrate on more immediate problems, such as fending off enemies in another corner of the map.

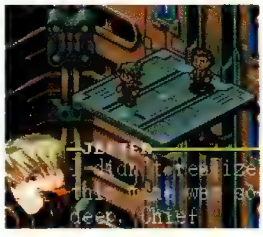
That issue aside, the levels are well designed and full of the ingenious puzzles that some will remember from *Lufia 2*. If the NPC A.I. were a little more fully realized, *CIMA* would rank as one of the best GBA games out there. As it stands, it's merely pretty darn good.

_Nich Maragos

PUB	ATLUS	PRICE	$29.99
DEV	NEVERLAND	PLAYERS	1
REL	OCTOBER	ORIGIN	JAPAN

GMR LUFTASTIC 7/10

BETTER THAN: SHINING SOUL
NOT AS GOOD AS: ZELDA: FOUR SWORDS
WAIT FOR IT: SWORD OF MANA



DEMIKIDS
DEVILUTION, NOT

EVERYONE | GBA

The collect-em-all genre is as Darwinian as gaming gets. You have your flood of new entries into the marketplace, each sporting that slight mutation to hopefully separate it from the rest of the pack, and only the strongest survive. *DemiKids* enters this world as something akin to a defenseless newborn, with no Saturday morning cartoon or otherwise recognizable brand to build on—unless you count the *Shin Megami Tensei* name, which isn't a hit with the kiddies so much as with the excitable import RPG fanboys. Can it survive, bereft of these figurative fangs?

Well, maybe. *DemiKids* is a good game on its own merits and offers significant differences from the horde of "me too" wildebeests infesting the prepubescent Serengeti. The collection aspect is interestingly recursive; your monstrous allies are themselves the ones who negotiate alliances with wild demons, so as you sign more contracts, even more become possible. Even better, there's a story here beyond a young boy's quest to be a master tamer of Whatever—not a great story, mind you, but something to please RPG fans, who are used to a little motivation for their actions.

Ultimately, however, the narrative trappings and more involved relationship with your pet beasts amount to little more than a link in the evolutionary chain, rather than a burst of punctuated equilibrium. This is truly much ado about nothing. If that's the sort of animal you want to take home, *DemiKids* has a finer pedigree than most, but the rest of us are still waiting for these things to grow a spine. A curiosity at best.

_ Nich Maragos





→ Not quite the atmosphere overload that PS1 games are, *DemiKids* is a shadow of the *Shin Megami Tensei* series the game is based on.

PUB	ATLUS	PRICE	$29.99
DEV	ATLUS	PLAYERS	1
REL	OCTOBER	ORIGIN	JAPAN

GMR POKEY 6/10

BETTER THAN: MEDABOTS
MIGHT AS WELL GET: POKEMON
HAVE YOU SEEN: DONNIE DARKO?

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WORLD

Foreign Ambassadors Report Peaceful Face-to-Face Negotiations with Terrorists in Venezuela

By Michael Golden
GLOBAL PRESS NETWORK

was relieved that the situation did not turn violent despite the heightened tensions between the two sides. As of yet,

Venezuela – A government official for a major

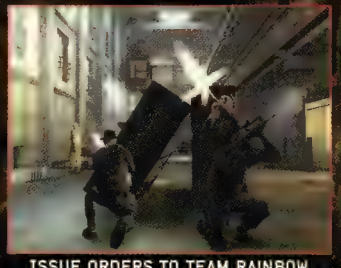
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THIS MONTH IN MORE

VIEWTIFUL JOE 095
→ Knowing is half the battle...wait, wrong Joe

TOP 10 TIPS: A.I. 098
→ Psh, who doesn't know the difference between Zheng He and Zheng Fei?

A VERY SPECIAL GMR REPORT 100
→ *GMR* goes hands on with Nokia's N-Gage, then quickly goes hands off

RETRO/ACTIVE 102
→ It's our 10th issue, and we're on fire. Call the *Burning Rangers*

THE LIST 104
→ Like college football polls, only without the college football

GAME GEEZER 110
→ The reports of his death have been greatly exaggerated

VIEWTIFUL JOE

COMPREHENSIVE STRATEGY GUIDE-A-GO-GO, BABY!

MR. JOE, I'M READY FOR MY CLOSE-UP

Don't let the easygoing and free-spirited backwards cap fool you—*Viewtiful Joe* is one tough SOB. And he has to be, considering that every single one of the eight boss fights you'll have to endure will having you screaming "CUT!" and storming off the set like so many spoiled director types. Do not be that director. Here's help:

THE POWERS—SLOW MOTION



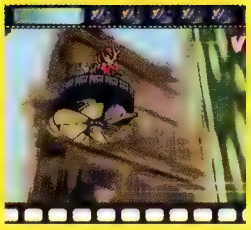
* You can dodge most attacks when you're in Slow, but at the cost of a lot of VFX.
* Doing certain things to certain enemies will make a target appear on them when you're using Slow. Dizzying an enemy is one way to make this happen, but hitting enemies repeatedly while you're in Slow (ballerinas or blue helmets) or dodging an attack (sword guys) can also target them. Hitting enemies while they're airborne (e.g., after an uppercut) can also produce targets on all enemies. To rack up a multiplier, hit as many enemies as you can before your VFX runs out.
* All attacks do more damage during Slow, including bomb explosions, enemies hitting either each other or vehicles, and Voomerangs.

THE POWERS—ZOOM

* The best way to attack most bosses is to zoom in and punch (aka Red Hot One Hundred) while you're in Slow. This will also do excellent damage to most normal enemies.
* Zoom has a useful scare effect on weaker enemies. When you Zoom, any foes nearby will begin quaking in fear and will be frozen in place. This is especially good against the cowboys, although you won't have Zoom when they first appear.
* A great way to deal with the tougher enemies is to uppercut them into the air—normally, not Slowed or Stunned—and then catch them with a Slow Red Hot One Hundred as they fall back down.
* You are practically invincible during the spinning kick. This is especially useful during Another Joe's clone attacks and Alastor's Round Trip.
* All attacks do more damage when Zoomed, including bomb explosions, enemies hitting either each other or with vehicles, and Voomerangs. Using Slow at the same time will cause these attacks to do even more damage.



THE POWERS—MACH SPEED



* This is great for running quickly between sections and for making you fall or land faster.
* To collect the boxes in the background, use the after-images that are released when you're attacking at Mach Speed. If no enemies are around, throw out a Shocking Pink bomb and Mach attack it to produce after-images.
* Mach Speed isn't so great for getting V points—better to dizzy an enemy and use normal attacks or Slow.
* Attacking repeatedly in Mach Speed will set you on fire. Not only is this needed for some puzzles, but it will also make you impervious to all fire-based attacks and to larva.

BE A STAR, BOY

WALL PIN

If you can pin a targeted enemy against a wall, hit them once with a normal punch, then jump right away and start pummeling them in the air for a quick multiplier heavy kill.

ITEMS

Alternating between punch and kick when you're Slowed will make the enemy drop the blue gourds that refill your VFX. For every 10 gourds, you will get either a big gourd or one of the controllers that stuns all the enemies.

X VOOMERANG

If you keep the button held down when starting up a Voomerang, it will eventually open out into an X shape, which will then do more damage.

DRAGON KICK

Zoom in on the Red Hot Kick to produce the Dragon Kick, a Burning Drill Kick that will continue to the ground even if you hit something. It will also set the enemy on fire.

MASTER UKEMI

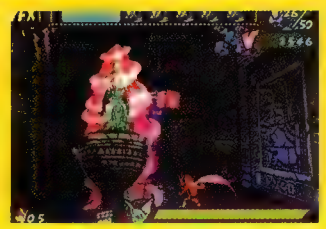
A successful Ukemi will earn you back one heart of energy and will preserve your V rank for defense during a task, making it vital to get those rainbow Vs.

VTFX TURBO CHARGER

This should be your first major purchase from the store. Save up and buy it as soon as you can, as it will allow you to use a lot more VFX.

THE FIRST FOUR BOSSES

CHARLES THE BAT



Hitting Charles in the air is pointless. Instead, jump or Slow dodge his boomerang attacks and wait for him to spiral up into the ceiling. If you are unsure about dodging the falling stalactites, use a little Slow to check their positions. Once they have landed, Charles will fly back and forth for a while. Uppercut one of the stalactites into the air so it hits him. He will drop to the ground. Now, Slow and attack him as much as you can *before* he recovers. His recovery will hurt you if you are still close and do not use Slow to dodge it. From level 6, you will have Zoom, so use a Slow Red Hot One Hundred to attack him. If he does the spinning vortex across the screen, you can Slow and punch him out of it.

You can beat Charles very easily using Voomerangs because a Voomerang hit will knock him to the ground. As soon as the battle starts, rev up a Voomerang and hit him before he attacks. Use Slow and hit him five or six times (and Zoom if you have it), then back away to a decent Voomerang distance before changing back to normal Joe. Quickly hold down Punch. When Charles recovers and flies up into the air, release the button and hit him with another Voomerang. Repeat.

HULK DAVIDSON, THE RHINO



You can prevent Hulk from using almost all of his attacks if you employ the following method.

He will start by jumping into the air. Once he lands and the red splash disappears, move up close to him. He will swing his ax; this attack is always low. A Slow Red Hot One Hundred between these attacks will not do much damage, but it will get you some Vs.

After three ax swings, Hulk should lower his head (he may jump first to position himself). Get out of the way by Mach Speeding away and jumping onto the side platform. Then, wait for him to hit the wall below you. Once he does, drop through the platform and land behind him, then Zoom and Slow Red Hot One Hundred. You should land a decent number of strong blows on his back before he turns around. Get out of there before Hulk starts blocking or the Big Red Skull Mark of Death appears. If you hit his ax too much, it will break and his attack pattern will change, so avoid that at all costs.

If you make a clean escape, he will return to jumping and you can repeat this process until he is dead.

GRAN BLUE, THE SHARK

Get close right away and Slow Red Hot One Hundred. Gran Blue will start spitting junk from his mouth. Keep hitting him. If your VFX is risky, dodge a piece of junk on purpose.

Gran Blue will perform this attack four times in a row, jumping over you in between each one. Stop hitting him before he stops spitting or his attack pattern will change. After the fourth attack, he will fly through the air toward you while snapping his jaws. Stay on the far-left side of the screen. When he starts charging, let him come straight toward you, then hop over him and quickly Mach Speed to land on the other side. (He shouldn't turn around before you're back on the ground.) If he enters the water and starts panting, follow and hit him quickly to stop him from getting energy back. Repeat this until Gran Blue starts breathing heavily, then Slow Red Hot One Hundred for massive damage.

Eventually, Gran Blue will push you away with his tornado attack. He will then twirl and the screen will fill with water. Use a Zoom kick to take care of the fish he spits. He will twirl again and mines will appear. Quickly position yourself so there is a mine directly between you and Gran Blue. He will start the chomping attack again, but if he hits the mine, it will stick in his mouth. Move in and hit him to explode the mine. The water will go down, and he will either spit junk or chomp again.

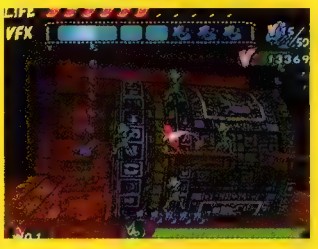


ANOTHER JOE



The secret here is to stay as close as possible to Another Joe. He's vulnerable when he calls Six or starts to do either clone attack; he's also vulnerable after you dodge one of his skull mark attacks.

If Another Joe does either of his clone attacks, the Zoom Spinning Kick performed in midair is invaluable. If he calls Six Machine, deal with the craft as quickly as possible—two Slow hits will knock it from the air, and you can finish it off on the ground. Also, Six will always drop a hamburger.



Hit Another Joe five times with a Slow Red Hot One Hundred. He will then spin kick. You can move away from this or just stay Slow and dodge it. After he finishes the spin kick, follow the images he leaves behind to where he has moved. If you keep the pressure on and keep close, you can beat him before he ever calls Six Machine or uses a clone attack.

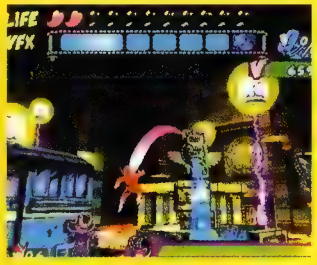


THE LAST FOUR BOSSES

ALASTOR, THE MIDNIGHT THUNDERBOY

The secret to beating Alastor very, very easily, without him using many attacks, is to set him on fire. As soon as the battle starts, he will stinger toward you. Jump to avoid this, and then either knock him into the larva or hit him with a dragon kick to set him alight. He will vanish and reappear, burning, above the closest fountain. After dropping into it to put himself out, he will be dazed. Now hit him twice with a Slow Red Hot One Hundred, which will knock him to the ground and follow up with a Dragon Kick right away (you will have to be very quick) to set him alight again. Then you can just repeat this process until he is dead.





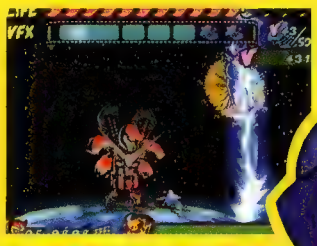
KING BLUE

To avoid his basic lightning attack, just stand still.

Then, the missile tower will emerge from the ground. Move straight to it and Mach Speed attack. Your after-images will fly into the background and hit Blue, stopping his lightning attacks. Your after-images will also destroy the big ship when it is in the background.

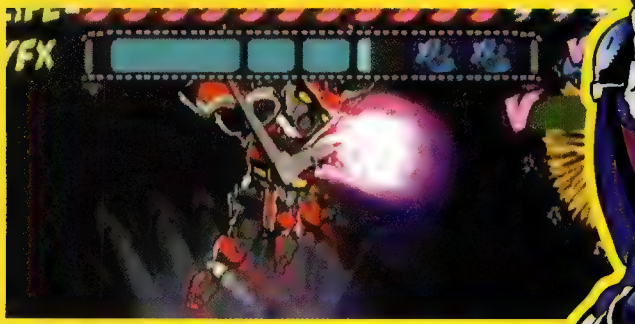
Keep an eye out for missiles here. Use Slow liberally until you know if the missiles are starting high or low, and then avoid them. Finish off the missile tower with Mach Speed. Blue will do another basic lightening, and then call the Die Fighters. Double jump and kick or punch twice in the air to hang there for a moment—this should lead the fighters off. Then, using his now-floating cane as a guide, drop down next to him, Slow, punch, zoom, and Red Hot One Hundred for around ten hits.

Drop to the ground and crouch. Even at its lowest point, the lightning from the cane won't hit you if you are crouching. He will also make lightning rain on all sides, but just stay still.



By now, the big ship will have appeared in the background. If the laser is going to hit you when you are crouched, then Slow and dodge it.

The missile tower will then appear again. Repeat.



LEO

Move to a rock and Mach Speed attack it until you get set on fire. This will protect you from his fireballs. Head toward him, and use Mach Speed again on the rock closest to him, before hitting him and immediately jumping away. His flames will go out, but you will probably still have some fireballs flying around the area. The rock you attacked before you hit him should give you enough burn to make it through until the fireballs disappear.



Once the fireballs are gone, move up to him. Dodge according to the skull mark and then hit him three times in slow. He will attack again, dodge it, then hit him in slow again. After three or four more hits, his shield will break. Dodge his attack, and then you can zoom in again for one Slow Red Hot hit before he starts spinning.

Once he starts spinning, spot high or low by his growl and the skull marks that appear. You can use a little Slow to give you some time, but it is best to dodge his attacks at normal speed. Dodge five attacks in a row and he will be dizzied. Slow Red Hot One Hundred him until he leaps away and into the flames.

When he jumps back out, Mach Speed along the platform a little, as there is a chance that he will come out right on top of you. Be ready with Slow when you jump over him in case a rock flies up, and then repeat.

Be warned that when he is almost dead, he will run around the platform a lot faster and probably do two circuits before stopping. Just keep your head and be sure he has started blowing fireballs before you make your move.

CAPTAIN BLUE

Hitting him with a slow dropping splash-kick (zoom in when you are descending) will both knock him off his feet and knock off his aura. Once he is on the ground, do this move on him repeatedly until he is in the corner of the screen.

Now, only start the Slow Red Hot One Hundred after you have just knocked his aura off. Although you won't be able to see him so well, this next part is vital to defeating him without letting him recover. When his aura comes back on, knock it off again and then zoom out and cancel into as small a jump as possible. Blue will now attack either high or low. You are in the air, so he will miss. Turn your jump into another splash kick, and knock him down again.

However, seeing as his aura is still off, even if you Slow Red Hot One Hundred him again, it will recover more quickly than before. Take advantage of the long time he will lie on the ground by recovering some VFX and then perform the drop jump again, after his aura has recovered, taking you back to the start of the process. Repeat until he is defeated. Way to go, Joe.



A.I.

HIS CODES ARE REAL. BUT HE IS NOT

It's been a rough month. *Soul Calibur II* and *Virtua Fighter 4: Evolution* eclipsed everything else in the office, making it difficult to get any work done. Our A.I. construct spent the wee hours trying to program Ivy and Taki into *VF4*, only to blow a fuse when it learned it couldn't be done.

01 SOUL CALIBUR II GC, PS2, XB







XB
PC
PS2
GBA
GC

Even if you're one of the many who never experienced the joy that Namco released on Dreamcast, chances are good you've seen it on one of the three current systems. There are tons of tricks to *Soul Calibur II*, and we've got the best listed below.

Unlocking Characters
For the following characters, play through Weapon Master mode.

Yoshimitsu
Defeat Stage 3 in Chapter 2
Charade
Defeat Stage 1 in Chapter 3
Sophitia
Defeat Stage 5 in Chapter 4
Seung Mina
Defeat Stage 3 in Chapter 6
Cervantes
Defeat Stage 4 in Chapter 3
Berserker
Defeat the Extra Mission in Subchapter 1
Assassin
Defeat the Extra Mission for Stage 2 in Subchapter 3
Lizardman
Defeat all the stages in Subchapter 2. Please note: To unlock Subchapter 2, your experience must be at level 72 and you must clear both the Original and Extra Mission for Stage 3 in Chapter 4.
Extra Arcade Mode
Complete Arcade mode with any character
Extra VS Battle Mode
Complete Extra Arcade mode with any character
Extra Survival Mode
Attempt Survival mode five times
Extra Practice Mode
Defeat Stage 1 in Chapter 1 of Weapon Master mode with any character
Extra Team Battle Mode
Complete Team Battle mode
Extra VS Team Battle Mode
Complete Extra Team Battle mode
Arcade Opening
Attempt Extra Time Attack (Extreme) mode five times
Martial Arts Weapon Demonstration
Available for purchase in Subchapter 1. Defeat Stage 3 in Chapter 3 in Weapon Master mode
Pregame Taunt
Press A, B, K, or G while the background is loading
Slow Motion Replay
Press L1 or R1 on Xbox or PS2, or the L or R buttons for GameCube.

02 MIDTOWN MADNESS 3 XB

If you're tired of driving a rust bucket, use this code to get some serious horsepower by unlocking every vehicle. Go to the Vehicle Selection screen, click and hold the left thumb stick, then quickly press L1, R1, L1, L1, L1, R1, R1, R1, L1, L1, R1, R1.





03 TRON 2.0 PC



For a game based on a movie that came out 21 years ago, *Tron 2.0* is doing gangbusters. Hack the computer from within—press T to enable the chat window:

All Weapons, Full Health, and Energy
mptears
All Weapons, Full Health, Energy, and Items
mpkfa
Full Health
mphealth
Full Ammo
mpammo
Level Skip
mpmaphole
God Mode
mpgod

04 OUTLAW GOLF XB



If you move your ball when no one's looking, you've come to the right place.

All Characters and Equipment Unlocked
Create a new file and call it Golf_Gone_Wild.
No Slices, Maximum Power
Hold R1 and press White, Back, White, Black, Back.
No Wind
During gameplay, hold R1 and press Up, Left, Down, Right, Up, Left, Down, Right, X, X.
Beating Token
During gameplay, hold R1 and press Black, X, Black, Black, X. This only works when you have no beating tokens.
Bonus Costumes
At the Character Selection screen, hold L1 and press Y, Y, White, Y, Black, Y.

05 THE GREAT ESCAPE PS2, XB



Steve McQueen lives on in Gotham Games' interactive version of one of the best World War II stories ever told.

Level Select and Great Escape Mode
PlayStation 2
Square, L2, Square, R2, Circle, R1, Circle, L1, L2, R2, Circle, Square
Xbox
Y, R1, Y, X, Y, R1, X, L1, X, X, X, Y

06 SPACE CHANNEL 5 PART 2 (IMPORT) PS2



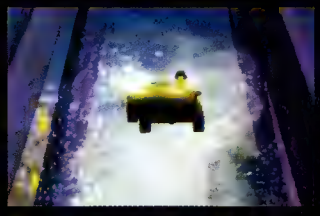
If you're one of Ulala's many fans who couldn't wait for her to appear in North America and had her imported, we've got a special code for you. To see her shake her booty in all its glory (and to watch her defeat the game), pause the game, hold L1 and R1, then press Circle, Triangle, Square. Use this to get past tough songs, then repause the game and reenter the code to disable it.

07 ALIENS VS. PREDATOR: EXTINCTION XB



We've got the tools you need. Start a campaign, pause the game, and press R1, R1, L1, R1, L1, L1, R1, L1, R1, R1, L1, R1, L1, L1, R1, L1. From there, go to Options and then to Cheats mode. You'll be granted unit spying, "cheat victory," 10,000 big ones, invulnerability, all levels enabled, and a cleared fog-of-war.

09 THE SIMPSONS: HIT & RUN PS2

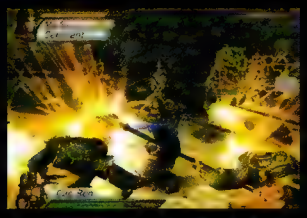


Hold L1 and R1, then for the desired code, enter the corresponding button string that follows.

No Top Speed
Square, Square, Square, Square
High Acceleration
Triangle, Triangle, Triangle, Triangle
Car Jumps on Horn
Square, Square, Square, Triangle
Traffic Dies in One Hit
Triangle, Triangle, Square, Square
Unlock Bonus Cameras
Circle, Circle, Circle, X
Play Credits Dialogue
X, Square, Square, Triangle
Red Brick Car
Circle, Circle, Triangle, Square
Invincible Car
Triangle, X, Triangle, X
Show Rendering Tree
Circle, X, Circle, Triangle
Trippy Springfield
Triangle, Circle, Triangle, Circle

08 DYNASTY WARRIORS 4 PS2, XB





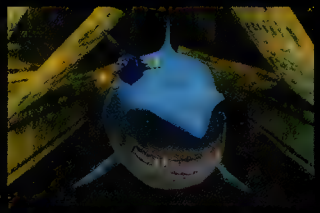


Every character in the game has a special weapon or item that only he or she can use. Below is a list of the characters, the stage at which you're awarded each item, and what you must do to obtain it.

Character-Specific Weapons/Items

Character	Stage	Conditions
Cao Cao	Battle of Chi Bi	Defeat Lu Meng and Gan Ning while Huang Gai is moving by boat (not before or after). Then, defeat Huang Gai and prevent the fire-attack event from triggering.
Gan Ning	Battle of Xia Kou	Ling Cao and Ling Tong must remain alive. Before the troop ships move, defeat Su Fei and Gan Ning (Chen Sheng in Musou mode), then trigger the troop-ship event. Defeat Cai Mao and Zhang Hu.
Jiang Wei	Battle of Tian Shui	Defeat the guard captains at Yi Castle and Tian Shui Castle, activate all ambushes set up at both castles, and defeat both Yin Shang and Liang Xu.
Liu Bei	Battle of Ru Nan	Defeat Xiahou Yuan within 3 minutes of starting the stage. Join with allied officers in this order: Zhao Yun, Zhang Fei, Guan Yu. Defeat all of Cao Cao's officers before Liu Pi's reinforcements arrive.
Lu Meng	Battle of Mai Castle	Defeat all seven enemy officers that appear as reinforcements: Liao Hua (the second time), Liu Feng, Meng Da, Zhang Fei, Zhang Bao, Guan Suo, and Jian Yong.
Xiao Qiao	Battle of Cheng Du	Trigger the "Advance to Cheng Du" event without triggering the "Cheng Du closes gates" or "Mian Zhu Ambush" events. Then, within the 4 minutes before Ma Chao arrives, defeat Guan Yu and Guan Ping.
Zhang Fei	Battle of Chang Ban	Defeat Xiahou Dun, Xiahou Yuan, Xiahou En, and Xiahou De. Then trigger both the "Stand at Chang Ban Bridge" and "Rescue Liu Chan" events.
Zhang He	Battle of Jie Ting	Defeat all enemy officers.
Zhou Tai	The Nanman Campaign	Defeat Wu Tugu before the fire attack. Without defeating Meng Huo even once, advance to the enemy's main camp and make Meng Huo retreat there. Do both before the climate begins to affect your army's morale.

10 FINDING NEMO XB



Yeah, yeah. You don't have to yell at us, we know it's a slow month for codes. Here's one for the breakout hit of the summer, *Finding Nemo*—perhaps the greatest cartoon-fish-based 3D action game to be released...this year.

Level Select
Go to the New Game screen and enter Y, Y, Y, X, X, B, X, Y, B, X, Y, X, Y, X, Y, B, Y, Y. If you've done it correctly, the word Cheat will appear at the top of the screen. Start a game, and once you've beaten the first level, you can select any level.



TECH SPECS

- 104MHz ARM CPU
- 176x108-pixel, 4,096-color illuminated display
- "Rocker" 8-way controller
- Multiplayer over-the-air gameplay
- Wireless connectivity via Bluetooth
- Tri-Band GSM 900/1800/1900 phone
- Multimedia messaging (MMS)
- WAP over GPRS
- Full e-mail support
- XHTML web browser
- Supports J2ME Java
- USB port for downloading
- MP3, AAC, MIDI, WAV ringtones
- Digital music playback and recording
- Stereo FM radio
- Built-in speaker
- MMC format game cards

HANDS ON!

N-GAGE

THE GIGLI OF GAMING HAS ARRIVED

GSM (900/1800/1900) READY | AT&T WIRELESS | CINGULAR | T-MOBILE

Nokia deserves discussion in business textbooks. From ubiquitous $50 phones to exclusive $21,000 platinum Vertu "instruments," the company embodies elegant mobile technology. Which is why we almost believed it could design a phone that plays great games.

But it hasn't. The N-Gage game deck is a Frankenstein-caliber design disaster, daftly blending into one device Atari's clumsy Jaguar numeric keypad, the graphics spasms of mid-1990s PCs, and the sex appeal of a shiny black banana phone. Even its features (see below) render it the proverbial jack-of-all-trades that does no task particularly well. Serious gamers will hate it.

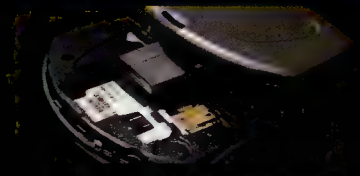
Start with N-Gage's ill-conceived vertical screen and a backlight that shuts off every 15 seconds between button presses—generally as you're reading, watching, or thinking. Add 21 confusingly labeled buttons and short battery life, then top everything off with a lackluster release calendar. And did we mention that some games may not include music? These are problems that only rare-game collectors and casual gamers would consider tolerating. Or not.

As a final shock, N-Gage will not connect online for simultaneous human interaction. Instead, players pay data fees for downloadable ghosts of saved competitors. That's just another of Nokia's underwhelming implementations; trust us, there are many more.

At N-Gage's premiere, Nokia obliviously preached to a silent crowd that "the future of gaming has arrived" with the $300 N-Gage. But without entirely redesigned hardware and better games, N-Gage's only future is in discount bins, and perhaps the upcoming editions of business textbooks. Everyone loves the big-mistakes chapters.

OOPS! HOW TO LOAD A GAME

You'll need a FAQ just to see Press Start



What happens when a game console lacks an external cartridge slot? You disassemble the whole machine, of course. First power down N-Gage, pop off the back casing, pull out the battery, then insert the MMC game card. Replace the battery and casing, hold the power button down, wait 30 seconds for the Main menu, and seven button presses later, you'll see the Title screen. Voila!

MORE FEATURES THAN A FINNISH ARMY KNIFE!

Although N-Gage's biggest selling point is its assortment of features, poor execution trivializes what could have been great ideas

GAMES



In-game screen capturing and automatic cheat downloads are novel, but who's going to use them? And where are the games from this decade?

PHONE



Holding the taco-shaped N-Gage edgewise to your ear looks ridiculous, and reception and sound quality are about average. The included ear buds help slightly.

MUSIC



It plays MP3s, AACs, and FM radio, and it can record radio broadcasts with 4MB of onboard RAM or memory cards. Audio quality is decent, but the menus are clunky.

PDA



Robust e-mail, Java/RealPlayer applications, and web browsing are N-Gage's most useful features, though other devices (Danger's Sidekicks) are better.

REALLY, REALLY FAMILIAR GAMES

TOMB RAIDER



Nearly identical to Lara's PS1 debut, yet lacking music. Frustrating controls and hard-to-see enemies could keep you from ever seeing the N-Gage-exclusive levels. Old news done bad.

GMR 4/10

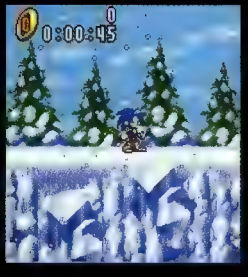
SUPER MONKEY BALL



Like its GBA "Jr." predecessor, but with shorter (!) draw distances. Race, Fight, and Target minigames are unlockable, and the music's nice. Simple, fun action; N-Gage's best launch title.

GMR 6/10

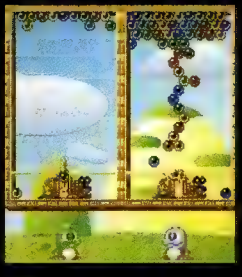
SONIC N



Ported from GBA's *Sonic Advance*, *Sonic N* mercifully offers a letterboxed mode, so you can see where you're running. Mindless, predictable fun with nice graphics and low-quality music.

GMR 5/10

PUZZLE BOBBLE VS



It's hard to say anything nice about this *Bust-A-Move* puzzler port, which runs at half-normal speeds, sans music. You couldn't give it away, but surely somebody likes slow two-player games.

GMR 1/10

PANDEMONIUM



The best 3D demo on N-Gage, *Pandemonium* feels just like the 1996 PS1 platformer, sans soundtrack. Pretty scenery and decent action nearly make this worth checking out.

GMR 5/10

MLB SLAM!



Take me out...of my misery. With brainless fielding and a pitching/hitting interface that doesn't even show bats hitting balls, THQ's *Slam!* isn't even ready for the peewee leagues.

GMR 3/10

PUYO POP



A solid port of Compile's old yet charming blob-matching puzzler with Bluetooth two-player support and little gloss. It's no *Tetris*, but it would have made a good pack-in game.

GMR 4/10

VIRTUA TENNIS



A stripped port of the GBA title with eight fake characters, load times, and no doubles play. But the music rocks, and it plays passable one-player human *Pong*...oops, tennis.

GMR 4/10

VERSUS GBA

Simplicity and quality help Nintendo prevail again



Nintendo Game Boys have mopped the floor with competitors for nearly 15 years, outselling more powerful machines from Sega, Atari, and NEC, just to name a few. So, could a gaming unknown like Nokia stand a chance against GBA SP?

In sales, the answer's clearly no, but N-Gage won't win a moral victory on the merits, either. Its two key assets—extra features and better graphics—aren't what they're cracked up to be. Bluetooth multiplayer is useful only if you can find other N-Gage owners (good luck), and over-the-air multiplayer is both costly and conceptually boring. Unless they need the phone and MP3 features, gamers will find N-Gage offers very little.

Even the graphics disappoint. Blame hardware or programming, but N-Gage ports generally look worse than GBA originals. Only *Tomb Raider* and *Tony Hawk* buck that trend—but five years too late to really matter.

There are many other problems. N-Gage's less-than-6-hour gaming battery life, small screen, and intermittent backlighting won't win gamers over, but buyers will really miss simple features previously taken for granted, such as hardwired volume controls, instant on/off switches, and clearly labeled buttons. N-Gage is probably history's first console to confuse players with Press Start screen prompts, because none of its 21 buttons is actually labeled Start. Just keep experimenting.

The best thing we can say about N-Gage is that it will be infinitely more collectable than the 25,000,000-plus-selling GBA. It'll go nicely on that shelf right next to our Virtual Boy...

VERDICT:

Ultimately, N-Gage is an oversized phone that incidentally plays bad games. We *dare* you to make a telephone call with one in public.

GMR 3/10 DISMAL

RETROPACTIVE

LONG-LOST CLASSICS OF DAYS GONE BY. THE SWEET SOUNDS OF SOLID GOLD

PS2

BURNING RANGERS

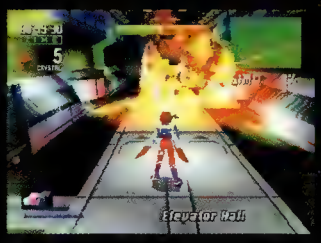
MAX POWER! BURNING RANGERS! WOW!

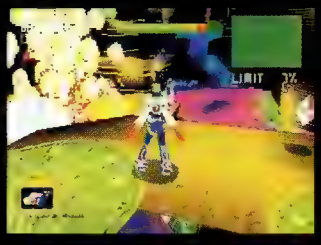
SEGA SATURN | MAY 1998

Burning Rangers is the spiritual heir to all those action-adventure cartoon shows that proliferated in the mid-'80s. If you're the right age, you remember—*He-Man, G.I. Joe, Captain Power*—and if you saw *Burning Rangers* later, vicious déjà vu likely set in. It has so much in common with its predecessors: brightly colored character designs, a goofy theme song, a neat sci-fi premise (spandex-clad heroes fight fires in the future), and some of the worst voice acting ever produced by human lungs.

It feels like this game came about after someone at Sega stumbled across an old tape of *M.A.S.K.* That's as good a story as any to explain how *Burning Rangers* happened. It's a product of Yuji Naka's 32-bit vacation—between *Sonic 3* and *Sonic Adventure*, his studio was content to produce only inventive weirdness for Saturn. *Rangers* hasn't aged as well as its contemporary, *NiGHTS*, but that's the fault of its gutless 3D engine, which couldn't handle a true free-roaming environment without coming apart at the visual seams. It is a fine action game at heart, and a next-generation update would be a great idea, if Sonic Team felt like doing the concept justice.

_Dave Smith







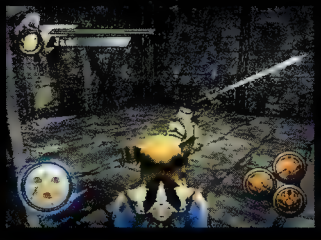
→ *Burning Rangers* was, at the time, touted as the game that would save the Saturn. Sadly, it wasn't, and it didn't. Perhaps Konami's upcoming *Firefighter F.D.18* will carry the—ahem—torch, for firefighter wannabes everywhere.

NOW... The game looks like hell, but the "We Are Burning Rangers" theme song is still a videogame classic. HARD TO FIND

THEN... *Burning Rangers* was one of the last five American Saturn games, so die-hard Sega fans didn't have the wherewithal to be too picky.

GMR TOASTY 6/10

GMR SMOKIN' 8/10



→ *Deception III* is the most richly detailed of the series, but the chuggy framerate and the touch control make it challenging to control.





→ It's worth picking up a copy just to check out the wack translation. If you'd rather not pay the money, try watching TV while your head is in a fishbowl. Similar results shall be achieved.

DECEPTION III: DARK DELUSION

SHUT YOUR TRAP

PLAYSTATION | MARCH 2000

Tecmo's *Deception* appeals to the gleeful sadist in all of us. But *Deception*'s dark, somber presentation generally refrains from making the kill also the punch line. However, it would nevertheless be untrue to say that there is no satisfaction to be found in crushing intruders under giant spiked boulders.

The third *Deception* is the best—and worst—of the series. In its favor, it has the biggest selection of traps, the most-complicated level designs, and thus the most-interesting potential combinations. Combos, after all, are the key to *Deception*. While it's possible to simply squash enemies with boulders, it's more entertaining and rewarding to bash them with a battering ram, knock them into a furnace, and then drop a boulder on their medium-rare remains.

Working against this fine concept are a terrible framerate—complex levels and flashy effects taxed the game's engine beyond its limits—and an incomprehensible translation. *Deception III* was published while Tecmo was between localization contractors, resulting in a near-unreadable script. The game may very well have an interesting story, but no native English speaker will ever know for sure.

If you can find a copy, though, *Dark Delusion* is a slice of something different—nothing else has this same blend of action, strategy, and puzzle gameplay. Its technical failures, meanwhile, are the perfect reason for Tecmo to bring it back on modern consoles. And it is.

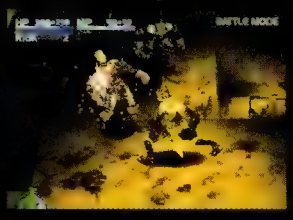
_Dave Smith

NOW... The text still makes no sense, and the graphics only look worse. Still, there's nothing like it. We can hardly wait for the new one! OBTAINABLE

THEN... The framerate crawls and the text makes no sense (at least not in English), but there's nothing else like it on a console.

GMR OH SNAP! 7/10

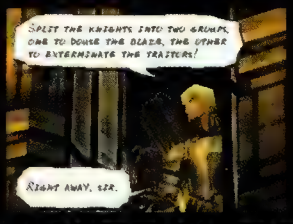
GMR MOUSETRAP 7/10













→ The boss battles in *Vagrant Story* are nothing if not epic. Of course, they're also insanely difficult, bordering on impossible if you haven't cultivated your weapons in precisely the required manner. Novices need not apply.

VAGRANT STORY

HIGH-CALIBER ROLEPLAYING FOR THE SOUL

PLAYSTATION | MAY 2000

Vagrant Story was an excellent game in its time, but it's even more interesting now as a preview of things to come. The creators of *Vagrant Story* and *Final Fantasy Tactics*—director Yasumi Matsuno, artist Akihiko Yoshida, and many other survivors from *Ogre Battle* developer Quest—now have the helm of the next *Final Fantasy* game. *Final Fantasy XII* apparently won't be much like its predecessors, but if it turns out like *Vagrant Story*, it may polarize opinions just a little.

Nobody has ever denied that *VS* is a beautiful game, because by all means it is. In concept and execution, it's like a Renaissance *Metal Gear Solid*, with the same blend of realism and rich environmental detail, complemented by great symphonic accompaniment and ambient sound effects. Yoshida's character-design style made a surprisingly smooth transition to 3D—the models are realistic, but they retain a few distinctive, familiar cues.

It's especially impressive to realize that this was Square's second fully 3D RPG. After only *Brave Fencer Musashi* for a warm-up, we got something that could hang with the best cinematic creations on PS1.

Vagrant Story is still the child of its parents, though, which is where the rift in its appeal opens up. The hero's weapons can be minutely customized to create a counter for nearly every type of enemy: Fighting a particular enemy with a particular weapon builds the weapon's effectiveness against that type of foe. This is well and good for the gearheads who spent hundreds of hours with *Final Fantasy Tactics*, but less-obsessive players run up against some pretty painful roadblocks. Some bosses demand a specialized weapon, and the game's ergonomics make building a big enough arsenal painfully difficult. Simpler weapon-switching commands could have made life a lot easier.

Those obstacles are so painful, though, because the drive to clear them is so compelling. *Vagrant Story* is aesthetically superb, and its Byzantine story got the localization it deserved. If you missed it in 2000, it's still worth a look—a look back and a look forward at the same time.

_Dave Smith

NOW... It looks great and sounds fantastic even now, and hardcore RPG fiends will love it. Grab it before it's too late, yo. EASY TO FIND

THEN... Almost nothing else on PlayStation looked this good, but only the strong could hack its complex challenge.

GMR WHAT A RIOT 8/10

GMR CHAIN MAIL 8/10



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GMR'S EXHAUSTIVE GUIDE TO THE ONLY GAMES THAT MATTER

BUYER'S GUIDE

PS2 TOP 100 OUT WITH THE OLD. IN WITH THE NEW

.hack//Mutation	Bandai	We've exhausted our supply of "something within a something" jokes, so just know that the series starts to pick up in this sequel.	8
Amplitude	Sony	A whole slew of new artists who, naturally, bring along brand-new tunes for your button-pressing pleasure.	8
ATV Offroad Fury	Sony	The key to being a successful ATV offroader lies in launching yourself through the air as often as possible. A fun and floaty racer.	9
Baldur's Gate: Dark Alliance	Interplay	A beautiful-looking *Dungeons & Dragons*–based hack-and-slash that can be played cooperatively with another player.	8
Bombastic	Capcom	Kudos to Capcom for bringing over the excellent Devil Dice series. Roll those dice, daddy needs a new pair of Dual Shocks.	8
Breath of Fire: Dragon Quarter	Capcom	An RPG that forces you to die and start over multiple times? It sounds ridiculous, but it actually works.	8
Burnout 2: Point of Impact	Acclaim	An aggressive driving simulator that defies the rules of physics. Includes a dedicated Crash mode for aspiring demolition-derby stars.	8
Capcom vs. SNK 2	Capcom	Take the best elements of *Street Fighter* and *King of Fighters*, and you'll have the best thing going in the world of 2D combat.	8
Chaos Legion	Capcom	Storm through 15 levels of nonstop action, commanding various squads of bodyguards. It's like Devil May Cry, only not so antisocial.	8
Colin McRae Rally 3	Codemasters	A superb rally racer with superrealistic properties—right down to the extended time you spend sitting in the Ford Focus.	8
Contra: Shattered Soldier	Konami	After numerous shoddy attempts to bring the classic *Contra* gameplay to a next-gen system, Konami finally gets it right.	9
Crazy Taxi	Acclaim	As good as opening your PlayStation 2, rigging Dreamcast hardware inside, and then loading up a DC build of *Crazy Taxi*.	8
Dance Dance Revolution: DDRMax	Konami	Before, if you wanted to play *DDR*, you had to subject yourself to Joe and Jane Public. Now, you can embarrass yourself at home.	8
Dark Cloud 2	Sony	Improves upon the first one in every way imaginable. Building and upgrading weapons to your liking is a blast.	9
Dave Mirra Freestyle BMX 2	Acclaim	Before turning to Larry Flynt for inspiration, *XXX* was based on the well-mannered Dave Mirra and actually focused on biking.	8
Dead or Alive 2: Hardcore	Tecmo	Before the entire series went Xbox exclusive, Team Ninja's gang of jiggly grapplers found a temporary home on PS2.	8
Deus Ex: The Conspiracy	Eidos	One of the best PC games of 2000 is ported faithfully to PS2. Upgrade your character's skills and attributes as you see fit.	8
Devil May Cry	Capcom	Did you know *Devil May Cry* was going to be *Resident Evil 4* before it was spun off into its own series? Oh, you did? Never mind, then.	9
Disgaea: Hour of Darkness	Atlus	Disgaea, aside from being a fantastically deep strategy game, is also the funniest SRPG we've ever played.	8
Dynasty Warriors 3	Koei	Melee combat set to the history of ancient China. Enemies number in the hundreds along branching story paths.	8
Escape from Monkey Island	LucasArts	LucasArts has a fine tradition of putting out excellent graphical adventure games, and this latest charmer is no exception.	9
ESPN NFL Football	Sega	The new first-person mode is an interesting addition to a solid game of football, but it's still not enough to top *Madden*.	8
ESPN NHL Hockey	Sega	The game formerly known as NHL2K(x), where the (x) is the last digit of the year we're in. Oh yeah, it's still really good.	8
EverQuest Online Adventures	Sony Online	PS2 owners finally get to see what the whole *EverQuest* thing is about—and will never be seen again.	8
Final Fantasy X	Square EA	PS2's first *Final Fantasy* does away the traditional overworld but introduces full voice acting. Artistically beautiful, as always.	9
The Getaway	Sony	Opinions vary wildly on this British-themed gangster (not gangsta) game. Even the British can't agree!	8
Gran Turismo 3 A-spec	Sony	Core gameplay is unchanged, but the graphics get a complete overhaul, which makes *GT3* the best-playing/looking sim on the market.	10
Grand Theft Auto III	Rockstar Games	A phenomenon of both gameplay and sales. A free-roaming interactive mobster film that's sold more than 8 million copies to date.	9
Grand Theft Auto: Vice City	Rockstar Games	As bad boy Tommy Vercetti, there's something indescribably cool about cruising Vice City's beach strip while rocking to "Billie Jean."	10
Guilty Gear XX	Sammy	Tired of waiting for *Street Fighter 4*? This one should more than compensate. Great visuals, great control, and great extras.	8
Half-Life	Sierra	After it was cancelled for Dreamcast, a console version of this PC classic didn't seem very likely. But here we are.	8
High Heat 2004	3DO	The best ball game available this year. "Simulation" doesn't seem like a strong enough word to describe it.	9
Hitman 2	Eidos	Most of the problems with the original *Hitman* have been fixed, making this one of the more rewarding action games on PS2.	9
Hot Shots Golf 3	Sony	Some golf games need something extra to attract gamers. How about arcade-style control, annoying taunts, and multiplayer modes?	9
Ico	Sony	An underappreciated work of art with challenging puzzles, fantastic lighting, and engrossing character relationships.	9
Jak and Daxter: The Precursor Legacy	Sony	The studio that gave birth to *Crash Bandicoot* brings a couple new mascots and a gorgeous new 3D world to PS2.	8
K-1 Grand Prix	Konami	The budding sport of K1 is faithfully represented here, as are the knockout blows to the jaw that sound just as painful as they look.	8
Kingdom Hearts	Square EA	When the amazing, talented artists from Square join forces with the amazing, talented artists from Disney, good things happen.	8
Klonoa 2: Lunatea's Veil	Namco	*Klonoa* became a rare find in the later days of PlayStation. The outstanding sequel looks to share the same fate. Grab it if you can.	8
The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers	EA Games	Anything bearing the valuable *Lord of the Rings* license will sell well. Happily, there's more to this beat-em-up than just the name.	8
Madden NFL 2004	Electronic Arts	New this year is the Playmaker system of adjusting plays as they happen, as well as a comprehensive Owner's mode.	9
The Mark of Kri	Sony	A slick action game with innovative controls: Each button is assigned to a different enemy, allowing for combat with multiple targets.	8
Maximo: Ghosts to Glory	Capcom	It's the spiritual successor to the classic *Ghosts 'n' Goblins*, complete with heart boxers and insane difficulty.	8
MDK 2: Armageddon	Interplay	Much improved over the original Dreamcast incarnation, *MDK 2 Armageddon* is one of the better recent action games.	8
Medal of Honor: Frontline	Electronic Arts	A strong single-player campaign paves the way through the beaches of Normandy and the heart of France. Great audio.	8
Metal Gear Solid 2: Substance	Konami	There's a lot in this update: 350 VR missions, 150 alternate missions, five Snake Tales, and one skateboard. Yes, a skateboard.	9
Midnight Club 2	Rockstar Games	Rockstar's rebellious racer is now online, but you'd better practice mastering the game's controls before entering competition.	8
MotoGP 3	Namco	After three attempts, Namco got it right...sort of. The realism is astounding, as long as you ignore the giant Mr. Driller.	8
NASCAR Thunder 2003	EA Sports	Hate turning left for hours? NASCAR games probably aren't your thing. But if you get it, *Thunder 2003* should be right up your alley.	9
NBA 2K3	Sega Sports	Yet another compelling reason to own a PS2 Network Adaptor, *NBA2K3* is the best-playing game of hoops on the system.	9

NBA Street Vol. 2	Electronic Arts	Even better than the first, *Vol. 2* takes you through the legendary players and teams of the NBA's storied history. A great deal of fun.	9
NCAA Football 2004	Electronic Arts	EA took the excellent *NCAA 2003*, added some new blocking and pass defense enhancements, and produced another winner	9
Need For Speed: Hot Pursuit 2	EA Games	Strangely, the game's best version is on the least-powerful hardware. Running from cops has never been this fun, or consequence free.	9
NFL Blitz Pro	Midway	The arcade game that was based on regular football is now an regular football game based on the arcade version of regular football.	8
NHL 2004	Sega	It doesn't look as good as its competitors, but then again, you don't need to be pretty to score goals.	8
NHL Hitz Pro	Midway	It's not realistic, but it's the closest we'll ever get to a new Ice Hockey or Blades of Steel.	8
Onimusha 2: Samurai's Destiny	Capcom	The effort put forward in defeating Nobunga in *Onimusha* has gone to waste, as he's risen from the dead and is appearing in the sequel.	8
Onimusha: Warlords	Capcom	Survival-horror with a taste for feudal Japan, gorgeous artistic design, and a whole lot more action than its *Resident Evil* kin.	8
RAD: Robot Alchemic Drive	Enix	It's hard to go wrong with giant robots blowing stuff up, but Enix's latest effort goes one step further with a novel control scheme.	8
Ratchet & Clank	Sony	Insomniac's terrific action-platformer has you jumping from world to world in search of new weapons and gadgets.	8
Rayman 2: Revolution	Ubi Soft	One of the best 3D platformers available, the *Rayman* franchise doesn't get the attention it deserves: It's good, and you should buy it.	9
Red Faction	THQ	A first-person shooter that features destructible environments, driveable vehicles, and a strong single-player campaign.	9
Resident Evil Code: Veronica X	Capcom	More of a true sequel than *Resident Evil 3*, its Dreamcast debut meant many fans missed out. Problem solved!	8
Rez	Sega	A fairly standard shooter dressed as a visual and aural masterpiece. Sadly unappreciated by the vast majority of the gaming world.	8
Ridge Racer V	Namco	The always enjoyable *Ridge Racer* series scores well, thanks to solid control, an enthralling sense of speed, and a fitting soundtrack.	9
Rygar: The Legendary Adventure	Tecmo	This Greek mythology–based action game is an update of the arcade and NES classic in name only. Fun combat and great music.	9
Sega Sports Tennis	Sega	Arcade-style tennis perfection when it launched for Dreamcast. It's holding up just as well on PS2.	8
Silent Hill 2	Konami	More creepy than downright scary, the *Silent Hill* series takes a more sophisticated, cerebral approach to the survival-horror genre.	8
Silent Hill 3	Konami	The third chapter of this grisly horror show once again has you running down dark hallways with a flashlight.	8
Simpsons: Hit & Run	Vivendi Universal	Holy crap! It's a good Simpsons game! Gamers will enjoy the fun driving missions, and fans will eat up the references.	8
The Sims	Electronic Arts	A new mode helps you figure out how to keep your Sim from pissing himself. Or, if you're like that, how to make him do it.	9
Sky Gunner	Atlus	If you can look past the slowdown issue (and it can be a pretty big issue at times), *Sky Gunner* is great shooting fun.	8
Sky Odyssey	Activision	A flight game that channels the spirit of *Pilotwings*, with mission-based gameplay and a large array of aircraft to pilot.	8
Sly Cooper and the Thievius Raccoonus	Sony	A solid platformer with a unique aesthetic and animations. Lacks a little in the challenge department; it's a little on the short side, too.	8
Smuggler's Run	Rockstar Games	In keeping with Rockstar's games, *Smuggler's Run* indulges the inner criminal in all of us.	8
SOCOM: U.S. Navy SEALs	Sony	Possibly the the best reason to own a PS2 Network Adaptor. The team-based military tactics work better online than off.	9
Soul Calibur 2	Namco	Better than the original, but not as innovative as we would have liked. The single-player game isn't as good as *VF4: Evolution*.	9
Splinter Cell	Ubi Soft	As expected, the PS2 port of the Xbox original takes a graphical hit. Doesn't mean it's not still a great game, though.	8
Spy Hunter	Midway	A re-creation of the classic that manages to avoid tarnishing all the good memories, which can't be said for a lot of classic remakes.	8
SSX	Electronic Arts	A surprisingly good snowboarder with over-the-top stunts and great course design; it stands out as one of the better PS2 launch titles.	8
SSX Tricky	Electronic Arts	*SSX Tricky* boasts a new set of insane gravity-defying and physically impossible stunts, not to mention all-new tracks and characters.	9
Sub Rebellion	Metro3D	Customizable submarines rule the waters of the future; *Sub Rebellion* is an action game that's short on graphics but very entertaining.	8
Tekken Tag Tournament	Namco	Essentially *Tekken 3* with enhanced graphics and a tag-teaming. Which isn't bad, considering *Tekken 3* is a great game to begin with.	8
Tenchu: Wrath of Heaven	Activision	*Tenchu* sneaked onto the list without us noticing. We were drunk on sake and telling tales of heroism, so that might be why.	8
Theme Park Roller Coaster	Electronic Arts	*Sim City* meets Six Flags. Design your own dangerous roller coasters without fear of getting slapped with wrongful-death lawsuits.	8
TimeSplitters 2	Eidos	Everything good about the original is here, with loads of new multiplayer options, including maps, weapons, and game modes, too.	8
Tokyo Xtreme Racer Zero	Crave	Cruise Tokyo's highways in search of less-than-legal street-racing action. Despite some visual issues, it's definitely worth checking out.	8
Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 4	Activision	Neversoft dropped the 2-minute time limit in Career mode and added an array of objectives. Level design is a step up from *THPS3*.	9
Twisted Metal: Black	Sony	With the franchise safely out of the hands of 989 Studios, *Twisted Metal* makes a welcome return to its former, gruesome glory.	9
Virtua Fighter 4	Sega	The *Virtua Fighter* series has always been finely crafted, and this version is no exception. The game's depth is staggering.	10
Virtua Fighter 4: Evolution	Sega	The greatest 3D fighter ever created, and it's only a measly $20. Mow the lawn twice, and it's yours.	10
Wakeboarding Unleashed	Activision	A surprisingly stellar extreme-sport title that manages to make the Tony Hawk formula work on water.	9
War of the Monsters	Sony	King Kong's agent wanted a cool $20 mil for this fun beat-em-up, but Sony balked and went with the less-recognizable Congar.	9
Wild Arms 3	Sony	A grand adventure with a Wild West theme, endearing characters, great music, and a refreshingly uncomplicated battle system.	8
Wipeout Fusion	Bam	The Designer's Republic touch may be missing, but the series' oft-imitated, never surpassed style of racing remains intact.	8
World Series Baseball 2K3	Sega	*WSB2K3* is the best-looking baseball game with a great Franchise mode, but it's got A.I. issues that need to be worked out.	8
World Soccer: Winning Eleven 6	Konami	Feet down, the most natural-feeling soccer game ever. It lacks *FIFA*'s presentation and licenses, but makes up for it in gameplay.	9
WWF SmackDown!: Just Bring It	THQ	Even if this game scored a zero, it would still sell a truckload of copies. Such is the marketing power of Vince McMahon and family.	8
Xenosaga	Namco	A massive RPG of epic story and length. Namco's now in charge of the *Xeno* series, and this is the first of many planned chapters.	9
Zone of the Enders: The 2nd Runner	Konami	Better enemies, better pacing, better music, better stages, and better weapons. What we're trying to say is, *ZOE2* is better than the first.	8

PS2

[BUY!]

APE ESCAPE 2

Everyone makes a big deal about monkeys. Monkeys in TV shows, monkeys in movies, monkeys in videogames, monkeys at the zoo, etc. Whenever they appear, everyone's all like, "Hah! Look at the monkey!" for no particular reason. Well, we're like that too. Buy this game. It has monkeys in it.



[AVOID!]

SUMMER BEACH VOLLEYBALL

Summer is over.

It's been over for a month.

That's reason enough.

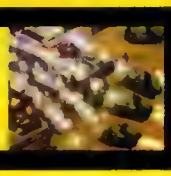


PC TOP 50 THAT'S NOT TRUE. PC'S LIVE FOREVER

TITLE	PUBLISHER	WHY WE LIKE IT	RATING
Aliens vs. Predator 2	Sierra	Three completely different first-person shooters combined into one dark and terrifying gaming experience.	9
Baldur's Gate II: Shadows of Amn	Interplay	The rare occasion when the sequel to a classic goes above and beyond its predecessor. Can't wait for *III*.	9
Black & White	EA Games	Highly conceptual "god game" that has you ruling over mortals with a little help from a giant cow monster.	8
Battlefield 1942	EA Games	Multiplayer shooter set in WWII that lets you jump in and out of vehicles (even planes!) while battling dozens of your friends.	9
Civilization III	Infogrames	Sid Meier's classic just keeps rolling along, getting bigger and more complex while somehow managing to remain just as addictive.	10
Commandos 2	Eidos	Control a squad of elite commandos in WWII as they infiltrate, detonate, and assassinate across multiple battlefields.	8
Day of Defeat	Activision	You won't need to upgrade your videocard to play this teamplay-focused WWII shooter. What a refreshing concept.	8
Diablo II: Lords of Destruction	Blizzard	The sequel to the ultimate dungeon-crawling clickfest should please anyone who wasted their teens playing the first game.	8
Dungeon Siege	Microsoft	Hack and slash doesn't have to be complicated. Sometimes, it can even be in beautiful 3D with no loading time between levels.	8
EverQuest	Sony Online	The massively multiplayer RPG that's so addictive, it makes crack look like Sanka. Play this game at your own risk.	9
EverQuest: Scars of Velious	Sony Online	The expansion pack to EverCrack opens up new worlds, new characters, and tigers with boobies (finally!).	9
Fallout Tactics	Interplay	Squad-based tactical strategy game set in the same universe as the classic *Fallout* RPG that sets a new standard.	9
Freedom Force	EA Games	Clever use of strategy and RPG elements help make this witty comic-book superhero-themed game one of the best.	10
Freelancer	Microsoft	It's not as simtastic as some might expect a PC space-shooter to be, but that's part of its charm. Random missions keep the fun going.	8
Ghost Recon: Island Thunder	Ubi Soft	This top-notch mission pack makes a decent modern combat simulation into an outstanding one.	8
Giants: Citizen Kabuto	Interplay	A shooter/strategy hybrid full of weird British humor, unique and beautiful 3D graphics, and naked lady sea monsters.	9
Grand Prix 4	Infogrames	It's a tough choice for Formula One fans; *GP4* and *F1 2002* are both worthy of your hard-earned dollars.	9
Grand Theft Auto III	Rockstar Games	The poster child for all that's wrong in gaming is chock full of all that's fun in gaming. And you get to import your own MP3s.	10
Grand Theft Auto: Vice City	Rockstar Games	The PC version of the hit game sports a higher resolution, custom MP3 soundtracks, and mouse-look for easier killin'.	10
Hitman 2: Silent Assassin	Eidos	An almost-perfect blend of action and stealth, it's a humongous improvement over the first game.	9
IL-2 Sturmovik	Ubi Soft	Amazingly realistic WWII flight sim covering a region seldom visited in computer games: the Eastern Front	9
Jedi Knight II: Jedi Outcast	LucasArts	Yeah, the lightsaber battles are sweet, but Lando's cameo just about seals the deal. And is his ship fly or what?	9
Kohan: Ahriman's Gift	Strategy First	Surprisingly accessible fantasy-themed real-time strategy that's as much fun in single player as it is against other mages online.	9
Madden NFL 2004	Electronic Arts	New this year is the Playmaker system of adjusting plays as they happen, as well as a comprehensive Owner's mode.	9
Max Payne	G.O.D.	Despite some corny writing, this überhip noir videogame feels like a movie, but plays like a great action game.	8
Medal of Honor: Allied Assault	EA Games	Worth it just for the incredibly intense D-Day mission that almost matches the same scene in *Saving Private Ryan*.	9
Medieval: Total War	Activision	The ultimate historical strategy game has everything from political intrigue to sweeping real-time battles.	9
The Elder Scrolls III: Morrowind	Bethesda	The definitive, open-ended RPG epic. Sort of like *GTA3*, but with magic and elves and all that *D&D* flava.	9
Motocross Madness 2	Microsoft	It's mud-splattering, off-road supercross fun with this free-wheeling dirt bike simulator from the makers of *ATV Offroad Fury*.	9
Myth III: The Wolf Age	G.O.D.	Bungie's renowned magical real-time strategy title goes 3D and maintains its fantastic multiplayer reputation.	8
NASCAR Racing 2003	Vivendi Universal	It's the final installment of the series, and it's also the best. There's not much new, but everything's been tweaked to near perfection.	9
Neverwinter Nights	Infogrames	If you're a *D&D* nerd, then you already know, but buy this one especially for the multiplayer and user-made mods.	9
Neverwinter Nights: Shadows of Undrentide	Atari	This *Neverwinter Nights* expansion has almost enough content to qualify as a new game itself.	8
No One Lives Forever	Vivendi Universal	Austin Powers ain't got nothing on Cate Archer, the hottest digital chick with a gun since that old hag Lara Croft.	9
No One Lives Forever 2	Vivendi Universal	As funny and stylish as the original '60s spy spoof (if that's even possible) and more fun to play, too.	9
Operation Flashpoint: Cold War Crisis	Codemasters	The first in the highly original series of combat sims, this soldier/flight/tank sim went on to win *CGW*'s 2001 Game of the Year award.	9
Operation Flashpoint: Red Hammer	Codemasters	Letting you play as the bad guys is the sure way into our hearts. Especially when they're nasty Rooskies.	9
Operation Flashpoint: Resistance	Codemasters	Features and content worthy of a brand-new game, this is a benchmark expansion for a classic overlooked game.	9
Rainbow Six 3: Raven Shield	Ubi Soft	The command interface and character A.I. have been revamped, but it runs slowly on anything but a high-end rig.	8
Rise of Nations	Microsoft	It's not the greatest RTS game we've played, but the nation-building aspect makes *Rise of Nations* especially appealing.	8
Sacrifice	Interplay	Action/strategy hybrid defies the conventions of all the genres it touches, while making for a fantastically original multiplayer experience.	8
Serious Sam	G.O.D.	Brainless running and gunning is an underappreciated way to waste a couple hours with a great-looking game.	8
Shadowbane	Ubi Soft	Because of these silly things called laws, the only way we can attack and capture neighboring cities is through *Shadowbane*. Look out.	8
Sid Meier's Sim Golf	EA Games	*Sim Golf* will have you laying out golf courses and building resorts like a virtual Robert Trent Jones.	8
The Sims	EA Games	It's impossible to categorize EA's addictive superblockbuster life simulator, just like it's impossible to stop playing it.	10
The Sims: Hot Date	EA Games	Gamers everywhere, rejoice! Finally, a game where you can actually learn a thing or two about interacting with the opposite sex!	9
Tron 2.0	Buena Vista	For our younger readers, we recommend renting the original Tron, waiting 20 years, and then playing this game.	8
Unreal II: The Awakening	Infogrames	Somewhat of a letdown in terms of story and gameplay, but good nonetheless. Call us in five years when our gaming rigs can handle it.	8
Warcraft III: The Frozen Throne	Vivendi Universal	Adds a single-player campaign to *Warcraft III* that isn't so moody and serious. There are some new multiplayer units as well.	8
Warlords Battlecry II	Ubi Soft	RTS and RPG, two great flavors that go great together—especially when stirred together with a big gnarly wizard's staff!	8

[BUY!]

RISE OF NATIONS



It's been kind of slow for PC gaming lately, so you might as well take some time to build a corrupt and overreaching empire bent on achieving complete domination of the entire world. You know, something to pass the time until *Half-Life 2* comes out

[AVOID!]

STAR WARS GALAXIES



Avoid...for now. We recommend giving it a few more months to mature (and for the release date of the promised space-flight expansion to arrive). And we really don't want to see you guys throw away $15 a month in a vain effort to become a Jedi.

XBOX TOP 50 WE'RE HUMMING THE ROCKY THEME

Apex	Atari	This racer is fantastic to look at and plays well enough to sit snugly between *Project Gotham Racing* and *Gran Turismo* on your shelf.	8
Baldur's Gate: Dark Alliance	Vivendi Universal	A beautiful-looking *Dungeons & Dragons*–based hack-and-slash that can be played cooperatively with another player.	8
Burnout 2: Point of Impact	Acclaim	An arcade racer with an emphasis on spectacular crashes, which—now that we think about it—defeats the purpose of competitive racing.	8
Cel Damage	Microsoft	Crazy cartoon car combat with great use of cel-shading and varied multiplayer options. It can quickly become repetitive, however.	8
Colin McRae Rally 3	Codemasters	Everybody's favorite rally racer, Colin McRae, has a brand-new game featuring finely tuned physics and car damage.	8
Crazy Taxi 3: High Roller	Sega	It's hard to improve upon the original, but that didn't stop Sega from trying. Twice. The setting is new, but it plays pretty much the same.	8
Dead or Alive 3	Tecmo	It's not the deepest of fighters, but it definitely competes for the best-looking prize. Plus, the girls are back in all their bouncy glory.	8
Dead or Alive: Xtreme Beach Volleyball	Tecmo	Pro tip: When playing *DOAX*, have your TV remote close by. If Mom bursts in, hit the surf button and flip to the History Channel. She'll be proud.	8
ESPN NFL Football	Sega	The new first-person mode is an interesting addition to a solid game of football, but it's still not enough to top *Madden*.	8
ESPN NHL Hockey	Sega	The game formerly known as NHL2K(x), where the (x) is the last digit of the year we're in. Oh yeah, it's still really good.	8
Fatal Frame	Tecmo	It's creepy. It's gory. It's the Tecmo game without the boobs. Another of those games better enjoyed with the lights off.	8
Halo	Microsoft	The definitive reason to own an Xbox. There are plenty of secondary reasons, sure, but no Xbox owner should be without *Halo*.	10
High Heat 2004	3DO	The best ball game available this year. "Simulation" doesn't seem like a strong enough word to describe it.	9
James Bond 007: NightFire	EA Games	*GoldenEye* set an impossibly high standard for the Bond license, but *NightFire* does an admirable job of re-creating the feel of the films.	8
Jet Set Radio Future	Sega	*Jet Set Radio Future* has substance and an overabundance of style. Sega simplified tagging in favor of a more robust trick system.	8
Madden NFL 2004	Electronic Arts	New this year is the Playmaker system of adjusting plays as they happen, as well as a comprehensive Owner's mode.	9
Max Payne	Rockstar Games	The bullet-time effect is the big draw of this action/shooter. Inspired by Hong Kong action flicks, set against a gritty New York City.	8
MechAssault	Microsoft	It's a good single-player game, but it really shines on Xbox Live, where you're pitted against other mech pilots.	8
Medal of Honor: Frontline	EA Games	A strong single-player campaign paves the way across the beaches of Normandy and through the heart of France. Great audio.	8
Metal Gear Solid 2: Substance	Konami	Includes the original *MGS2: Sons of Liberty*, five brand-new missions featuring Solid Snake, and a slew of challenging VR missions.	9
Midnight Club II	Rockstar Games	Slightly better than Microsoft's *Midtown Madness*, although both are worthy additions to your library—especially if you have Xbox Live.	8
MotoGP 2	THQ	What we said: "Can only be described as the best motorcycle-racing sim on the planet." What more do you need?	9
NASCAR Thunder 2003	EA Sports	Hate driving left for hours? NASCAR games probably aren't your thing. But if you get it, *Thunder 2003* should be right up your alley.	9
NBA Street Vol. 2	Electronic Arts	Even better than the first, *Vol. 2* takes you through the legendary players and teams of the NBA's storied history. A great deal of fun.	9
NCAA Football 2004	Electronic Arts	EA took the excellent *NCAA 2003*, added some new blocking and pass defense enhancements, and produced another winner	9
NFL Blitz Pro	Midway	The arcade game that was based on regular football is now an regular football game based on the arcade version of regular football.	8
NHL 2004	Electronic Arts	It doesn't look as good as its competitors, but then again, you don't need to be pretty to score goals.	8
NHL Hitz Pro	Midway	It's not realistic, but it's the closest we'll ever get to a new Ice Hockey or Blades of Steel.	8
Otogi: Myth of Demons	Sega	Otogi boasts some of the finest artistic touches you'll find on Xbox. Oh, the slice and dice, destroy everything gameplay is fun, too.	8
Outlaw Volleyball	Simon & Schuster	It's like *NBA Jam* on the beach, only with far less clothing and class. Play it online for extra fun.	8
Panzer Dragoon Orta	Sega	Aesthetically beautiful and a dream to play. See what Saturn owners were enjoying seven years ago (the original *Panzer Dragoon* is included).	9
Phantom Crash	Phantagram	Xbox certainly isn't lacking in mech titles. The quirky, unique *Phantom Crash* has upgradeable mechs and a story-driven one-player mode.	9
Project Gotham Racing	Microsoft	The refinement of the Kudos point system is the biggest difference between *Project Gotham* and its Dreamcast predecessor.	8
RalliSport Challenge	Microsoft	This rally racer is one of the best examples of Xbox's power. More arcade than simulation, with enough depth to please both camps.	8
Return to Castle Wolfenstein: Tides of War	Activision	The single-player missions still aren't much to write home about, but at least you can play them with a pal. The online play is gravy.	8
Sega GT 2002	Sega	Sega's answer to the *Gran Turismo* phenomenon. Not quite as expansive in terms of tracks and cars, but better with the details.	8
Silent Hill 2: Restless Dreams	Konami	A creepy port of a creepy game with a creepy bonus: a creepy extra episode of the creepy story. Play without lights for extra creepiness.	8
Simpsons: Hit & Run	Vivendi Universal	Holy crap! It's a good Simpsons game! Gamers will enjoy the fun driving missions, and fans will eat up the references.	8
Star Wars Jedi Knight II: Jedi Outcast	LucasArts	As usual, the *Star Wars* universe inspires great aesthetic design to complement Raven Software's solid sense of game design.	8
Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic	LucasArts	The best thing to happen to the *Star Wars* franchise since *The Empire Strikes Back*, and the best RPG we've played in years.	10
Steel Battalion	Capcom	If you want to play this game, you have to shell out $200 for the massive controller. For those with the cash, it's well worth it.	8
Soul Calibur 2	Namco	Better than the original, but not as innovative as we would have liked. The single-player game isn't as good as *VF4: Evolution*.	9
The Elder Scrolls III: Morrowind	Bethesda	An exhaustive open-ended RPG that essentially allows you to make it up as you go along, with hundreds of people to talk to.	8
TimeSplitters 2	Eidos	Everything good about the (PS2) original is here, with loads of new multiplayer options including maps, weapons, and game modes.	8
Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon	Ubi Soft	There's not much of a graphical upgrade from the PC version, but the interface and audio are improved. Goes great with Xbox Live.	8
Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell	Ubi Soft	Comparisons to *Metal Gear Solid* were inevitable. *Splinter Cell* holds its own, and even outdoes Konami's behemoth at times.	9
Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 3	Activision	If you have to have *Tony Hawk 3*, improved graphics and framerate and the custom soundtrack option make this the best version to get.	9
Unreal Championship	Atari	Mindless deathmatching with great weapon design and entertaining multiplayer modes, including the sport-like Bombing Run.	8
Wakeboarding Unleashed	Activision	A surprisingly stellar extreme-sports title that manages to make the *Tony Hawk* formula work on water. Watch out for the gators.	9
World Series Baseball 2K3	Sega Sports	*WSB2K3* is the best-looking baseball game and it has a great Franchise mode, but it's got A.I. issues that still need to be worked out.	8

[BUY!]

WOLFENSTEIN: TIDES OF WAR

Tides of War is a fine enough game as it stands, what with online play and Nazi slaughtering and all. But how else are you going to practice for online *Halo 2* deathmatches, huh? What? *Halo* on PC? Oh...yeah, suppose you're right.



[AVOID!]

BRUTE FORCE

If you absolutely, positively must have a squad-based shooter for your Xbox...then go buy EA's *Freedom Fighters*. If you absolutely, positively must have two squad-based shooters for your Xbox...it's time to re-evaluate your financial priorities.



GAMECUBE TOP 50 IT'S ONLINE...SORT OF

TITLE	PUBLISHER	WHAT WE SAY	FINAL RATING
Animal Crossing	Nintendo	The game that never ends is based largely on routine chores, yard work, and interior decorating. So, why is it so much fun to play?	9
Beach Spikers	Sega	Easy to pick up and easy to play, like *Virtua Tennis*. As with most arcade sports games, it's definitely better as a multiplayer affair.	8
Billy Hatcher and the Giant Egg	Sega	Sonic Team cracked a few eggs and whipped up a great new platformer. Yeah, that was lame. Sorry.	8
Bomberman Generation	Majesco	A surviving member of the Old School, *Bomberman* has earned some tenure in the industry. This time, he sports a cel-shaded look.	8
Burnout 2: Point of Impact	Acclaim	The best-looking—and best-playing—racer on the system. Be prepared to spend many hours in Crash mode.	8
Cubivore	Atlus	A simple but compelling game of reproduction and cannibalism. Plus, you can get Hump points. You know you're interested.	7
Dave Mirra Freestyle BMX 2	Acclaim	Before turning to Larry Flynt for inspiration, *XXX* was based on the well-mannered Dave Mirra and actually focused on—get this—biking.	8
Eternal Darkness: Sanity's Requiem	Nintendo	This game, if you let it, will mess with your head. The insanity effects are clever (the first time) and the scenery is downright creepy.	8
F-Zero GX	Sega	Unfortunately, F-Zero GX doesn't include vomit bags. Or the AX arcade machine. One of those would have been nice.	9
Godzilla: Destroy All Monsters Melee	Atari	Godzilla & Co. wrecking cityscapes and each other, with support for up to four players. What's not to like?	7
Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets	EA Games	This Potter kid seems to be pretty popular, so the folks at EA decided to make a *Zelda*-esque adventure based on his magical exploits.	7
High Heat 2004	3DO	The best ball game available this year. "Simulation" doesn't seem like a strong enough word to describe it.	9
The Legend of Zelda: The Wind Waker	Nintendo	It looks and feels like the best *Zelda* game ever, but sailing back and forth in the overworld just feels like work.	9
Luigi's Mansion	Nintendo	We all wanted *Mario* at launch, and we got this. Like getting socks for Christmas, it's good and comfortable, but not what we wanted.	7
Madden NFL 2004	Electronic Arts	New this year is the Playmaker system of adjusting plays as they happen, as well as a comprehensive Owner's mode.	9
Mario Golf: Toadstool Tour	Nintendo	The only thing missing is Mario hurling his 4-iron into the pond while screaming obscenities. Oh well, next time.	9
Mario Party 4	Nintendo	There are few things better in life than three friends, *Mario Party*, and a healthy flow of alcoholic beverages (if you're legal, of course).	8
Metroid Prime	Nintendo	As if they dissected *Super Metroid*, added a dimension, and put it back together again with slick graphics. In fact, it's exactly like that.	10
MLB Slugfest 20-04	Midway	What *Blitz* is to football, *Slugfest* is to baseball. If you can't sit through nine innings of the regular game, this one's for you.	7
NASCAR Thunder 2003	EA Games	It's apparently the fastest growing "sport" in America, and *Thunder 2003* is packed under the hood, including an in-depth Career mode.	9
NBA 2K3	Sega	Added to this year's version is a slick ESPN interface, an upgraded Franchise mode, and a fresh class of rookies.	9
NBA Courtside	Nintendo	No longer under the Nintendo development umbrella, Left Field's final installment of the *Courtside* series is a worthy b-ball game.	8
NBA Street Vol. 2	EA Sports	Even better than the first, *Vol. 2* takes you through the legendary players and teams of the NBA's storied history. A great deal of fun.	9
NCAA Football 2004	Electronic Arts	EA took the excellent *NCAA 2003*, added some new blocking and pass defense enhancements, and produced another winner.	9
NFL Blitz Pro	Midway	The arcade game that was based on regular football is now a regular football game based on the arcade version of regular football.	8
NHL 2004	Electronic Arts	It doesn't look as good as its competitors, but then again, you don't need to be pretty to score goals.	8
NHL Hitz Pro	Midway	It's not realistic, but it's the closest we'll ever get to a new Ice Hockey or Blades of Steel.	8
Phantasy Star Online Episode I & II	Sega	Unhealthily addictive. The pursuit of rare items helps one ignore the somewhat repetitive battle (and the $9 monthly fee).	9
Pikmin	Nintendo	*Mario* creator Shigeru Miyamoto got the idea for this quirky strategy game from observing his personal garden. What kind of garden?	8
Resident Evil	Capcom	This remake could almost be described as a new game. But is it really *Resident Evil* without the laughably bad voice acting?	9
Resident Evil 0	Capcom	This one actually *is* a brand-new game, with significant changes such as droppable items and the dirty-sounding partner swapping.	8
Sega Soccer Slam	Sega	An arcade-style soccer game with off-the-wall characters, arenas, and power-ups. And it's still better than *Virtua Striker*!	8
Simpsons: Hit & Run	Vivendi Universal	Holy crap! It's a good Simpsons game! Gamers will enjoy the fun driving missions, and fans will eat up the references.	8
Skies of Arcadia: Legend	Sega	If you missed it on Dreamcast—and many of you did—you've been given a second chance. It's even got new characters.	8
Smuggler's Run: Warzones	Rockstar Games	An enhanced version of *Smuggler's Run 2*, with new vehicles and maps and an expanded multiplayer mode with support for four players.	8
Sonic Adventure 2: Battle	Sega	Remember when you and your friends held daily *Sonic* vs. *Mario* debates? Don't you feel silly now? Or at least a little old?	7
Sonic Adventure DX	Sega	*SA2* got an upgrade, while the original *Adventure*...uh, gets a bunch of old Game Gear games. Still a classic worth revisiting, though.	7
Soul Calibur 2	Namco	Better than the original, but not as innovative as we would have liked. The single-player game isn't as good as *VF4: Evolution*.	9
Star Fox Adventures	Nintendo	Rare's last Nintendo effort took forever, but *Star Fox Adventures* takes its inspiration from *The Legend of Zelda*—and that ain't bad.	7
Star Wars Rogue Squadron II	LucasArts	At times, *Rogue Leader* synchs closely with scenes from the movies. Impressive when you consider it took only nine months to make.	9
Super Mario Sunshine	Nintendo	Maybe not quite as groundbreaking as *Super Mario 64* was, but even when Nintendo "misses," it makes a big splash.	9
Super Monkey Ball	Sega	Monkeys in balls! An exceptional game based on a simple concept; some of the later levels will eat you for lunch.	8
Super Monkey Ball 2	Sega	Even more monkeys in balls running around for your entertainment! The extra game modes add quite a bit to the simple concept.	8
Super Smash Bros. Melee	Nintendo	A Nintendo fanatic's dream, if only for the exhaustive gallery of collectible Nintendorabilia. Plus, you can beat the crap out of Jigglypuff.	9
TimeSplitters 2	Eidos	Everything good about the original is here, with loads of new multiplayer options including maps, weapons, and game modes.	7
Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 3	Activision	For those with the Dual Shock hardwired into their psyche, switching over to the oddly shaped GameCube controller can prove difficult.	9
Ultimate Muscle	Bandai	If the soap-opera antics of the WWE don't go far enough over the top, perhaps the wacky *Ultimate Muscle* will be more to your liking.	9
Wario World	Nintendo	After all this time, Wario has become quite effective at reclaiming his stolen treasure. Too effective, as *Wario World* is over far too quickly.	7
Wave Race: Blue Storm	Nintendo	Great wave physics, awesome weather effects, and a deeper control scheme than the original. An underrated gem of a racer.	8
WWE Wrestlemania X8	THQ	Ratings have cooled and Stone Cold has had some run-ins with John Law, but that's irrelevant, as wrestling games will always sell.	8

[BUY!]

BURNOUT 2: POINT OF IMPACT



Are you tired of the state suspending your drivers license? Fed up with costly repair bills and cumbersome lawsuits? There's got to be an easier way to inflict massive destruction...and there is! Call now and order *Burnout 2: Point of Impact* today!

[AVOID!]

MACE GRIFFIN: BOUNTY HUNTER



There are only a few positive things that can be said about *Mace Griffin: Bounty Hunter*. Chief among them: At least LucasArts didn't turn it into a Boba Fett game, further tarnishing the precious *Star Wars* franchise. So it's got that going for it.

GBA TOP 50 SUNSHINE AND LOLLIPOPS

TITLE	PUBLISHER	WHAT WE SAY	GMR RATING
Advance Wars	Nintendo	Turn-based military strategy that should be a part of everyone's GBA library. Once you get sucked in, it's hard to pull yourself away.	8
Advance Wars 2	Nintendo	*Wars 2* only adds a single new unit, but it's chock full of new maps, new terrain, and new CO powers.	8
Baseball Advance	THQ	There are only four stadiums and no multiplayer, but it's still a great game of baseball.	8
Boktai: The Sun is in Your Hand	Konami	It's gonna be a bright (bright!), briiiiight sun-shiney day. Well, it had damn well better be.	8
Breath of Fire 2	Capcom	It's a port of the old SNES RPG, but we'd be willing to bet that quite a few of you missed it the first time. Don't repeat that mistake!	7
Car Battler Joe!	Natsume	A fun and unique Car-PG that lets you build cars, add parts and weapons, and travel the world in search of your father.	7
Castlevania: Aria of Sorrow	Konami	Better sound and castle design than *Harmony of Dissonance*, but much too short. The soul system is ace, though.	8
Castlevania: Circle of the Moon	Konami	*Castlevania* is meant to be played in two dimensions, and this game shows why. A complex card system governs your special abilities.	9
Castlevania: Harmony of Dissonance	Konami	The second *Castlevania* is one of the best reasons to own a Game Boy Advance. The colors are brighter and the bosses are bigger.	9
Chu Chu Rocket!	Sega	A highly addictive and highly cute puzzle action game from Sega that's best played with multiple friends. Mouse mania!	7
F-Zero: Maximum Velocity	Nintendo	A new *F-Zero* based on the classic SNES game, with improved graphics, new tracks, and four-player support.	8
Final Fantasy Tactics Advance	Square-Enix	At long last, we have a new Final Fantasy Tactics—and it's absolutely spectacular. Set aside 60 hours of free time...	9
Final Fight One	Capcom	Another enhanced port of an SNES original. How come mayors of large cities don't go on ass-kicking rampages anymore?	8
Golden Sun	Nintendo	A deep combat engine and brilliant graphics make this one of the better RPGs available on GBA.	8
Golden Sun: The Lost Age	Nintendo	Picks up right where the first one left off. The battle system remains basically unchanged, but the puzzles are much more rewarding.	8
Gradius Galaxies	Konami	Konami's classic shooter series translates to the portable very well. Great graphics and plenty of challenge.	7
GT Advance 3	THQ	The *GT Advance* series has always been technically marvelous, and *GTA3* (yeah, we know) finally has a battery-save function!	8
Guilty Gear X Advance	Sammy	Not surprisingly, the animation and soundtrack take a hit, but it still plays like its big brother versions.	7
Iridion II	Majesco	The first *Iridion* served as a neat technical demo, but its sequel concentrates more on having good gameplay. Another quality shooter.	7
Kirby: Nightmare in Dreamland	Nintendo	A remake of the NES classic *Kirby's Adventure* with updated graphics and multiplayer support.	8
Klonoa: Empire of Dreams	Namco	Straying from the original formula, this *Klonoa* is more of a puzzle game than a platformer, with great graphics and sound.	8
Legend of Zelda: A Link to the Past	Nintendo	Invite three friends and you've got a bona fide *Zelda* party. Drink red medicine till you puke and skinny-dip in Lake Hylia!	9
Lufia: The Ruins of Lore	Atlus	Perennially overshadowed by Square's offerings, the *Lufia* series is just as engaging as *Final Fantasy*. It's also more challenging.	8
Lunar Legend	Ubi Soft	The anime cut-scenes and superb voice acting may be gone, but the great *Lunar* gameplay and story remain intact.	8
Mario Kart: Super Circuit	Nintendo	A balanced blend of *Super Mario Kart* and *Mario Kart 64* that even includes all the tracks from the former.	8
Mega Man and Bass	Capcom	It's hard, so very hard. But what *Mega Man* game isn't? Play as either Mega Man or Wily robot Bass; each one has different abilities.	7
Mega Man Battle Network 2	Capcom	More of an RPG than an platformer, the *Battle Network* series is a nice change of pace for Mega Man and pals.	7
Mega Man Battle Network 3	Capcom	*Battle Network 3* is pretty much more of the same with a few minor additions, but it's already a great series.	8
Mega Man Zero	Capcom	A difficult yet engaging installment of the *X* side story played as Zero, who is equipped with an arm cannon and beam saber.	7
Metroid Fusion	Nintendo	The follow-up to *Super Metroid* is eight years late, but the wait was well worth it. An adventure that ends way too quickly.	9
Ninja Five-O	Konami	A challenging platformer that brings back fond memories of *Bionic Commando*. Complete with throwing stars and katanas.	7
Phantasy Star Collection	THQ	Straightforward classic RPG action that's been overlooked for far too long. Includes *Phantasy Star 1*, *2*, and *3*.	9
Pokémon Ruby & Sapphire	Nintendo	Aside from 2-on-2 battles, the first GBA *Pokémon* combo doesn't really change the original formula.	7
Rayman Advance	Ubi Soft	*Rayman* is just as good in 2D as he is in 3D. It looks great and provides a decent challenge.	8
Sonic Advance 2	THQ	*Sonic Advance 2* is much improved over the first one, and it connects to GameCube's *Sonic Adventure* games to boot.	8
Sonic Pinball Party	Sega	Not limited to just hedgehogs, Sega's solid pinballer features tables from the classics *Nights* and *Samba de Amigo*.	8
Street Fighter Alpha 3	Capcom	Sure, the limiting button configuration prevents *SFA3* from being a completely accurate port, but it's great nonetheless.	8
Super Dodgeball Advance	Atlus	You're not going to find that many dodgeball games on the market, so thankfully this one is worthwhile. Better in multiplayer.	7
Super Ghouls & Ghosts	Capcom	Remember how frustrated you got playing through *Ghouls & Ghosts*? Get ready to do it all over again.	8
Super Mario Advance: Super Mario 2	Nintendo	Aside from the odd naming system, you can't really complain about a portable version of *Super Mario Bros. 2*.	8
Super Mario Advance 2: Mario World	Nintendo	There's really not much else that can be said except "portable *Super Mario World*" and "you should buy it."	9
Super Mario Advance 3: Yoshi's Island	Nintendo	Yoshi is the star of this show, one of the greatest 2D platformers ever put to silicon. There are even a couple of new bonus levels.	9
Super Monkey Ball Jr.	THQ	An excellent port of the game that sold many a GameCube. THQ even included Monkey Bowling and Monkey Fight!	8
Super Puzzle Fighter II	Capcom	Sometimes, you just get bored with *Tetris*. *Puzzle Fighter II* is a fantastic port of a fantastic and highly addictive game. Buy it now.	8
Super Street Fighter II	Capcom	The combo of *SFA3*, *Guilty Gear X Advance*, and *Super Street Fighter II* is devastating. And you don't even need any quarters!	8
Tactics Ogre: The Knights of Lodis	Atlus	An incredibly deep strategy RPG with a branching story line and a rewarding battle system.	8
Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 3	Activision	It's amazing how Activision managed to cram *Tony Hawk* into a cartridge while keeping the essence of the console version intact.	8
Virtua Tennis	THQ	A surprisingly faithful rendition of the console versions with good visuals and an engaging World Tour mode. The best tennis on GBA.	8
Wario Land 4	Nintendo	The *Wario* series of platformers has always been excellent, and this one is no exception. Short but incredibly sweet.	8
Wario Ware, Inc.	Nintendo	A large collection of microgames fuels *Wario Ware*'s madcap mayhem. The freshest game we've seen in a long time.	9

[BUY!]

SONIC PINBALL PARTY



When combined with *Pokémon Pinball Ruby & Sapphire*, the GBA turns into an unstoppable pinball juggernaut. *Sonic Pinball Party* provides plenty of pinball pleasure, and it's yet another tiny morsel for insatiable *Nights* aficionados to eat up.

[AVOID!]

CRAZY TAXI: CATCH A RIDE



Hey, how ya doin'? We're going downtown. (What's that smell?) Wait a minute, this isn't the way we usually take. Are you sure...no, downtown. I said we wanted to go downtown...could you turn that music down a little? Never mind, just let us out here.



GAME GEEZER

HE'S OLD! HE'S PISSED!

ADVENTURE. HMPH! EXCITEMENT. SNORT! A JEDI CRAVES NOT THESE

"Hey, Mr. Geezer—we thought you were dead!"

No, not yet, unfortunately. Can't say as I didn't try, though. Spent one day last month bent over and naked with some doctor probing my insides—and then Mrs. Geezer walked in on us and clocked me one real good.

"Um, ick."

You punks don't wanna know? Then don't ask. Anyway, I'm back.

So, get your stuff together kids—we're going on a road trip.

"Cool, Mr. Geezer! Where are we going? Disneyland?"

No, we're not going to Disneyland! Freaky-ass talking animals give me the creeps. Reminds me of the '70s.

"The...1870s?"

Never mind. The point is, I have an appointment to keep, and I'm gonna need some backup. I'm going to kick George Lucas' ass.

"Cool! We hate him!"

Yeah, me too. I shoulda done it way back when he created those freaking Ewoks, but I was too dang nice. Too much bedroom lovin' from Mrs. Geezer, I guess—took the edge off my hatred. Thank God she's over that now and I can think clearly again.

And what I'm thinking is this: If I pulled down my pants right here and now and emptied my bladder onto this photo of Luke Skywalker, it wouldn't be any worse than what George Lucas is doing to the *Star Wars* franchise these days. It's been a year since I saw *Episode II*, and if it wasn't for Natalie Portman's exposed belly, I mighta stood up and killed myself right there in the theater. Fortunately, Pocket Geezer is a big fan of Natalie Portman.

"Please don't talk about Pocket Geezer, Mr. Geezer."

All I'm trying to say here is that I've had enough. I sat through two god-awful movies, and the only thing that kept me going was knowing that at least I'd get to play *Star Wars Galaxies*. Now it turns out that the game's designers apparently studied from the George Lucas school of how to ruin a franchise, which goes something like this:

1. Ignore everything that people ever loved about the movies.

2. Make everything unnecessarily complicated and obtuse.

3. Focus on minutiae and drudgery because that's what people love about *Star Wars*.

Why let people wield lightsabers and fight Sith scum in *Star Wars Galaxies* when they can sit around in cantinas instead, begging other players for heals from wounds they received from butterflies? Why let players become intergalactic heroes soaring the skies in TIE fighters when they can wander through empty cityscapes selling shoes instead? Remember how Luke Skywalker didn't really want to go become a Jedi and fight the Empire, but actually wanted to stay home and do Uncle Owen's chores ? Yeah. That's right. I'm being sarcastic. Well, that's what *Star Wars Galaxies* is—An Uncle Owen simulator.

Thank God for *KOTOR* and *Jedi Academy*. At least those two games figured it out. The designers looked at the old movies and gave us what we wanted: drama, humor, fighting, heroes and villains, and, most important, lightsabers.

And speaking of lightsabers: put mine in the trunk and get in the car. I'm done talking. The first swing takes out that Anakin kid. The next one takes out the *Star Wars Galaxies* team. And the final blow, delivered with Darth Maul-style finesse, goes to George Lucas, who really needs to stop now before doing any more damage to my precious memories.



POCKET GEEZER IS A BIG FAN OF NATALIE PORTMAN









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THE AMOUNT OF WELL-WISHING LETTERS WE RECEIVED ON BEHALF OF THE GEEZER WAS, AND IS, TOUCHING. IT IS THIS VERY OUTPOURING OF EMOTION THAT SAVED THE GEEZER FROM BEING PROCESSED INTO GEEZER JERKY. ISN'T THAT TOTAL SWEETNESS?

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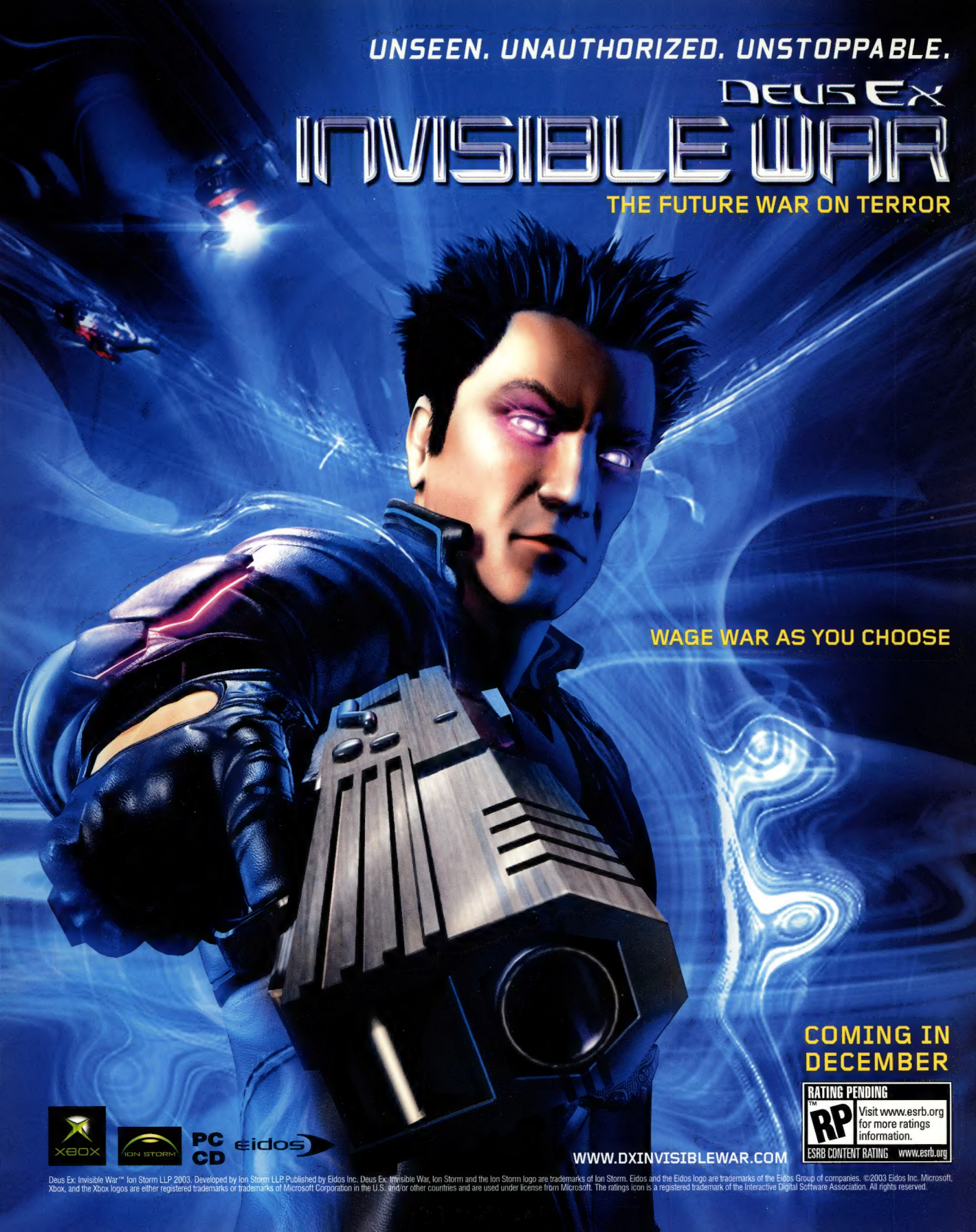
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*Warning: May cause mild addiction



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